

THE REVOLUTIONIST
A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS
BY TERENCE J. MACSWINEY

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THE REVOLUTIONIST
A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS
BY TERENCE J. MACSWINEY

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TO MY MOTHER'S MEMORY

*for the heritage of her great faith,
the beauty of her living example, and
the ecstasy of her dead face.*

P R E F A C E

I

THE rule now generally followed by dramatists, of making no change of place within an act, imposes limitations that it is our common interest to remove. The admission of the rule is, perhaps, chiefly due to the developments in stage-effect, and the obvious difficulty of a change where elaboration in setting is practised to the present great extent. But a solution can be found. Let us understand that such stage-effect is not only unnecessary but even injurious to the drama, and that by returning to simpler methods we may get more freedom with no less truth. For example, a stock interior may be used to represent different places; the change being indicated by dropping the curtain for a minute. A critic, while admitting the utility of it, may yet claim that, the public having been accustomed to such elaborate spectacles and such realistic effects in scenery having been obtained, a return to simpler ways will be resented. But we may dispute the point. When the spectators, on the raising of the curtain, discover a brilliant scene and exclaim, "how natural," they but remind us that they remember it is artificial. The manager in reaching for effect has over-reached himself: in seeking to increase the illusion he has destroyed it. He may even thereby have done us a

service. The audience that accepts the elaborate convention will accept the simple one, which leaves the way open for a return to freer methods in our management of the stage.

II

As well as looking for more freedom in the making of the play, we should look for more logic and coherence in the construction and writing. To this end Irish writers would be well advised in following French usage in the distinction of scenes. With us a change of scene means a change of place: with the French a change of persons in any one place is a change of scene; every new grouping of persons, therefore, even though it be constituted by the entrance or exit of a single person (we might except a servant or a follower) making a new scene. Such a rule is a clear protection against the introduction of unnecessary persons saying or doing irrelevant things—one should pause before giving a superfluous character the importance of making a scene. Were we to adopt this rule, it would save us in some measure at least from what is illogical and irrelevant.

III

Finally we should ponder on the notable absence from our contemporary drama of the power that Rossetti commended in the sonnets of Shakespeare with his fine phrase "fundamental brain-work." It may be we have tried to give imagination in literature a supreme place independent of intellect; but Shakespeare's supreme place is due to the wedding of his marvellous imagination to an intellect no less

marvellous. His fundamental brain-work was needed to sustain and keep in order his vast imaginative world. Let us bear in mind that superficial people may have imagination of a sort, and that to decide the question of pre-eminence we must judge by qualities of heart and brain. Imagination is, let us say, the soul of literature: but a man may have a mean soul. Where, then, is our protection from a mean literature? The point requires notice; for we do not look now for what is true, but what is strange: whence the exorbitant praise of much that is merely curious and shallow. This is no attempt to exalt the claims of intellect over imagination, but to wed them: united they are supreme. Intellect without imagination is dull: imagination without intellect is foolish. I think foolishness is no improvement on dullness. Since the common cry of the critic is for imagination, we need not urge it; but that we may truly appreciate this high faculty of the soul, let there be a plea for intellect. How far there is evidence of intellect in our contemporary drama is a matter for reflection. The return of Philosophy, what Meredith pleaded for the Novel, will be likewise the saving of the Drama. In its absence what is the alternative given to us? Episodical playlets, insignificant characters, trivial incidents, and undistinguished writing.

T. J. MACSWINEY.

PERSONS

HUGH O'NEILL, *a Clerk.*
 CON SHEEHAN, *a Small Contractor.*
 KEANE, *a Student.*
 ROHAN, *a Teacher.*
 LAWLOR, *a Shop-assistant.*
 DOYLE, *a Law-clerk.*
 MACKEY, *a Civil Servant.*
 BENNETT, *a Reporter.*
 MAHER, *a Compositor.*
 KIELY, *an Agent.*
 NORA MANGAN, *Daughter of John Mangan.*
 FAN O'BYRNE, *subsequently Con's wife.*
 FATHER O'HANLON, *Adm.*
 FATHER O'CONNOR, *C.C.*
 JOHN MANGAN, *a Successful Merchant.*
 DR. FOLEY, *a Dispensary Doctor.*
 MRS. SULLIVAN, *a Housekeeper.*
 SERVANT.
 OTHER CLUB-MEMBERS *and*
 NATIONALISTS.

The action takes place at Dublin. Time, contemporary.
Certain political reforms are assumed.

ACT I *Hugh O'Neill's Rooms at Mrs. Sullivan's House.*
 „ II *At Fan O'Byrne's House* [Rooms.
 „ III FIRST PLACE. *The Presbytery, Father O'Hanlon's*
 SECOND „ *Hall before The Empire Carnival.*
 THIRD „ *At The Nationalists' Club.*
 „ IV FIRST „ *At Hugh O'Neill's Rooms.*
 SECOND „ *At Sheehan's House.*
 „ V FIRST „ „ „
 SECOND „ *At Hugh O'Neill's Rooms.*

THE REVOLUTIONIST

ACT I

PLACE. *Hugh O'Neill's Rooms at Mrs. Sullivan's House.*

SCENE I

FATHER O'CONNOR, MANGAN, MRS. SULLIVAN.

(Father O'Connor and Mangan, standing, have just arrived. The priest is a young man, about twenty-eight years old. Mangan is about sixty years. They are apparently awaiting someone. The housekeeper, Mrs. Sullivan, enters. She is over middle age. Her manner is nervous.)

Mrs. Sullivan. Mr. O'Neill should be back at any moment. Will you wait, please?

Mangan. Yes—a little while.

Mrs. Sullivan. The moment he comes, I'll tell him you're here. Will you sit down? *(She arranges the chairs.)*

Father O'Connor. Thank you. *(She goes.)*

SCENE II

FATHER O'CONNOR, MANGAN.

(Mangan sits. Father O'Connor remains standing.)

Father O'Connor. I don't feel hopeful for our success.

Mangan. I'm sorry for bringing you out of your way. I could have asked Hugh to our place; but as he's intimate with the family, it would be less easy to have a private word there without attracting notice. It seemed fortunate meeting you, though. You're in Hugh's confidence and could perhaps influence him to take a sensible view of things.

Father O'Connor (uneasy). My feeling is he won't take the position.

Mangan. It's absurd to see him wasting his ability in a stuffy office for £100 a year.

Father O'Connor. Yes. This opening in journalism would seem the one way out; and it's a dream of his. He writes much and always with distinction.

Mangan. Why should it be always voluntary? Why, since his ability is recognised, can't he make it a profession and get into his right sphere?

Father O'Connor. Your offer may lead to that.

Mangan (having removed the priest's doubt in a measure, he unaccountably exposes his own). If he takes it. It's absurd to be uneasy, but, frankly, like yourself, I am.

Father O'Connor. It's a rare chance you can secure the offer.

Mangan. Yes, I know Mr. O'Kelly, the proprietor of *The Irish Standard*, intimately. He was, moreover, a great friend of Hugh's father and would like to give Hugh the vacant post.

Father O'Connor. What is this sub-editorship worth?

Mangan. £200 a year. Why, it's a splendid lift. And, of course, the editorship will be his in time. The paper is the most prosperous in the provinces and the future is safe.

Father O'Connor. Don't tell him simply, his future is safe.

Mangan. Mr. O'Kelly is exceptionally liberal.

He says Hugh need not profess the views of the paper.

Father O'Connor. That strikes me as rather strange.

Mangan. Well, that's how things go now.

Father O'Connor. Yes—it makes discussion of the matter possible. If you had said Hugh should change his views to suit the job—well, I can imagine his attitude.

Mangan. I secured the point with Mr. O'Kelly. Hugh is free to keep his own views.

Father O'Connor (diffidently). He may disagree silently with the editorial view; but if he wants to disagree openly—

Mangan. That's absurd.

Father O'Connor. I'm only suggesting a difficulty.

Mangan. That's what would keep him in his obscure corner. If he continues as he is, 'twill make him bitter.

Father O'Connor (after a pause). I don't think so. I find him grow deeper and in some things reticent; but he has too much humour in him to become bitter.

Mangan (arrested by the priest's manner). I agree with you—he's not bitter yet. But the position is serious now. Hugh must leave the extravagance of his teens behind him like the rest of us. He's a man of thirty and a decision made now is a turning-point for the future. I should be sorry to see him come to nothing.

Father O'Connor. I can't imagine him coming to nothing.

Mangan. Then let us urge him to something—to this. *(They hear a step and become attentive.)*

Father O'Connor (listening). That's like his step—ah! *(as Hugh enters.)*

SCENE III

HUGH, MANGAN, AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Hugh (bright in manner and quick in movement). This is a pleasant surprise—a joint visit. I hope I haven't delayed you.

Mangan (rising). Not at all. (*The three shake hands.*)

Hugh (with a little smile). I feel the atmosphere of strange tidings. What's the news? (*He looks at Father O'Connor.*)

Father O'Connor. Mr. Mangan will tell you. He brought me to support him.

Hugh (with some surprise). To support him?

Mangan (with some diffidence). I have a proposal to make.

Hugh. A proposal—what about?

Mangan. First, let me ask are you quite satisfied with your office at £100 a year.—Is it £100?

Hugh. Almost.

Mangan. Not quite £100. And you've even given up grumbling. You don't think of a change for the better?

Hugh. I think of many things.

Mangan. I have in view an opening in journalism.

Hugh. That would be a happy change.

Mangan. You refused one offer, I know.

Hugh. It involved a change of convictions.

Mangan. But you would like the profession?

Hugh. Oh, yes. I trained for it—which explains the last offer.

Mangan. Because I've an offer I think you can accept.

Hugh. It seems too good to be true.

Mangan (more easy). I can be frank. The sub-editorship of *The Irish Standard* is vacant at £200 a

year. You know our old friend Mr. O'Kelly is the proprietor. I don't mind saying 'twas my suggestion you should get the opening, and he was quite pleased. He knows a good deal of your work in this line; and your own condition is covered. Whatever the views of the paper you may have your own convictions.

Hugh (a little reserved). That is very unusual. Is it a definite offer?

Mangan. Yes. Mr. O'Kelly is broad-minded. And he says—well—*(with a little smile)* these extreme views always pass.

Hugh. Not always.

Mangan. But you won't object on this ground?

Hugh. No, since my personal freedom is assured. It was very kind of you to speak for me. The objection is to a man's concealing his views for—one of the many reasons now customary.

Mangan (at a loss, pauses). Well——

Hugh (waits a moment and continues in a manner considered but not aggressive). The condition is important just now as I'm to speak at a Davis anniversary meeting where it's understood we're to have some straight talk about dishonourable peace.

Mangan. But, Hugh, something is expected on your side.

Hugh. A condition?

Mangan. Mr. O'Kelly said: O'Neill is free to believe what he likes; but I know he speaks in public now and then: it is, of course, understood he won't denounce from a platform anything that appears in the editorial columns of the paper.

Hugh. I felt 'twas too good to be true.

Mangan. But don't you see that would be utterly unreasonable?

Hugh. Then, I must pay a price?

Mangan. We must all pay a price, Hugh.

Hugh. The price is too high.

Mangan. But you get special conditions. Don't

you admit it's generous? None of us can be dictators. You can't be.

Hugh. I have not sought to be.

Mangan. Surely, you won't persist? You get away from straitened circumstances and drudgery you hate. You reach a congenial atmosphere, more leisure and more luxury—too much luxury is a danger, but a little is almost necessary; and—*(pauses for words)* can't you see all you sacrifice?

Hugh. But all these things may come in time.

Mangan. You must go to meet them.

Hugh. That depends.

Mangan. Have you no thought for the future—marriage, home, comfort? You're a responsible man. *Now* is the time. It's even a duty to think of this, though most people turn to it with pleasure.

Hugh. All my prejudices lie that way.

(Mangan brightens at this. Hugh all through is cordial with a touch of regret where their views diverge.)

Mangan. That's more encouraging. I don't want to flatter you, but you're the sort of fellow that would attract a nice girl.

Hugh (smiling). I wish the girl would step into the picture.

Mangan (smiling, more easy). Come, that's better. But you must make a home for her—a place to which she could bring her friends with pride. You'll realise later how much we all do need something of the splendour and comforts of life. You must not affect to despise them.

Hugh. Despise them!—they attract me very much, perhaps too much.

Mangan (warmly) There! I knew you would take a sensible view of things.

Hugh. But are they indispensable?

Mangan. Well—*(He feels significance in the question and pauses.)*

Hugh. I'm afraid we've got away from the point.

Mangan. Hugh, I see you won't consent. I somehow anticipated it and brought Father O'Connor as a support. You know he's keen like you on the national question but in reason.

Hugh. I'm open to reason.

(Father O'Connor has been an attentive listener during the progress of the argument. He takes it up now with Hugh, while Mangan assumes the silent and watchful role.)

Father O'Connor. Hugh, we're at one on the point of independence, and, I think, this position would have been impossible some years ago, when the country was agitated. But now everything is shaping in our favour. With recent reforms whatever reservations are made we really do govern ourselves.

Hugh. Our freedom is partial.

Father O'Connor. Yes, but there is scope for development and we are widening our scope. I know your fear was the danger of a clash with your hands tied; but the danger does not exist now as it did in the old days.

Hugh. I think it exists and may be even more acute.

Father O'Connor (confident). I don't think so. Everywhere I go, I find a better spirit growing. The old government hostility is ended: the desire for friendship is genuine. We've got considerable power, and on our side the tendency is to forget old sores.

Hugh. As matters are, it's not a good tendency.

Father O'Connor. But it's promising to come to the end of the long struggle. The cry is on both sides: it's genuine and all but unanimous.

Hugh. Still, it's not unanimous.

Father O'Connor. There are only a few dissentients. With the majority on both sides for peace, the possibilities of friction grow less every day.

Hugh. The few can see to the friction.

Father O'Connor. Are you not pessimistic?

Hugh. No—optimistic.

Father O'Connor. Optimistic! Surely, you don't count on friction?

Hugh. Yes; plenty of friction will serve us.

Father O'Connor (baffled). Well—I don't know what to say. I told Mr. Mangan I was not sanguine about this interview.

Mangan (intervenes, showing irritation). Hugh, your attitude is hardly conciliatory. You give a stubborn word or two of dissent to everything. It was friendship brought us. I'm sorry for having moved in the matter at all.

Hugh (with feeling). Don't misunderstand me. You know how I used to indulge in wild tirades on this question; and people were irritable or contemptuous or merely amused at the tirade. It, perhaps, sent me to the other extreme. I'm really as grateful as if you secured me the highest post in the land.

Mangan (cordial). I know, Hugh, I know—

Hugh. Tell Mr. O'Kelly of the meeting and that I'm engaged to speak.

Mangan. That for him will settle it.

Hugh. He would have no respect for me if I left my side simply to secure the job. Whatever his politics, he's an honourable man.

Mangan (moving to go). I'm not satisfied, Hugh. This is not like an unconsidered step of ten years ago.

Hugh. After all, it's a question of comparison in values and a choice. I can't take the offer and keep what I have. And a small income with a free spirit is better than a comfortable servitude.

Mangan (pausing to look at Hugh). There's a pull behind. It comes to everyone.

Hugh. Perhaps you're right. It has occurred to me. But I don't think it's here.

-*Mangan.* I must go.

Hugh. I hope you're not much disappointed.

Mangan. I confess to being uneasy. But, Hugh, I respect you. (*Holding out his hand.*) I respect you, boy. (*They shake hands.*)

Hugh. Your heart was always right.

Mangan. Don't be too confident. There will be the pull. Good-bye.

Hugh. Good-bye.

(*Mangan goes out. Hugh detains Father O'Connor as he is about to follow.*)

SCENE IV

HUGH AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Hugh. Could you stay, Jack ?

Father O'Connor. I'll return shortly.

Hugh. I want to say something. It's important. You won't fail ?

Father O'Connor. No.

Hugh. For the present, then.

(*Father O'Connor goes out. Hugh hears voices below and waits at the door. Con comes.*)

SCENE V

HUGH AND CON.

Hugh. Hallo, Con.

Con. I knew you were alone—met the others going out.

Hugh. Any news ?

Con. I think matters won't go at the meeting as we desire.

Hugh. What have you heard ?

Con. Bennett and the others are likely to carry their point for a secret society. If they do, our fellows, not to stand in the way of united action, and being a minority, may consent.

Hugh. The situation is complicated. There are so many secret and semi-secret societies tolerated, fellows think it a sufficient reason for one on our lines. To cap it, I hear Father O'Hanlon is going to denounce us all.

Con. Is that definite? The rumour brought me here.

Hugh. I mean to find out.

Con. Father O'Connor could tell you.

Hugh. He's returning. I mean to ask him.

Con. If Father O'Hanlon fulminates, 'twill prejudice our position.

Hugh. Yes. He'll giye out some commonplace about secret societies; and they'll say we're afraid of him. Have you seen Doyle lately?

Con. Last night for a moment only. We had no word of this.

Hugh. I sent a line asking him to call and have a straight talk about it.

Con. You won't move him. He's set on secrecy and very obstinate.

Hugh. But he's straight, and he has more intellect and courage than any of the others. I confess I don't like and don't trust one or two of them. Anyway, he has influence in their councils and I want a frank talk with him beforehand. We can say more than is possible at a meeting.

Con. When do you expect him?

Hugh. When I heard your step, I thought 'twas he. (*Knock.*)

Con. Someone now.

(*He's near the door and opens it. Doyle enters.*)

SCENE VI

HUGH, CON, AND DOYLE.

Hugh (cordial). Welcome, Doyle.

Con. We were just talking of you.

Doyle (a little constrained). I was glad to get your line, O'Neill. A frank talk about this matter is what I want.

Hugh. Take a seat. We won't beat about the bush. *(The three sit down.)*

Doyle. Good. If men of our way of thinking are to make common cause for another fight, we must return to old methods.

Hugh. To old principles—rarely to old methods.

Doyle (hard). If we're to work a revolution, we must be prepared to conspire.

Hugh. We want soldiers, not conspirators. A good conspirator is rarely a good soldier.

Doyle. We must face special conditions in Ireland. Remember that.

Hugh. Yes, an Irishman is the best soldier and the worst conspirator in the world.

Doyle. Then we must make him a good conspirator. A secret society is necessary for us. To organise an army we must get at men individually: to be effective we must work in camera.

Hugh. We can't organise an army in camera.

Doyle (rising with impatience). Will you say what you propose?

Hugh. I'm convinced the success of our movement depends on our keeping the open and making the fight straight and consistent. Everyone must understand. We want no mystery—and no cover for crooked dealing.

Doyle (with heat). Working secretly isn't crooked dealing.

Hugh. I said cover.

Doyle. It's the same thing.

Hugh. Not so:—but this secrecy has meant a man comes into a room and makes a protest of some sort of secret allegiance, of which he's to pretend nothing elsewhere; and to-morrow or even to-day he gives the lie to that allegiance——

Doyle (angrily). Now——

Hugh (rising). Steady a moment. You know it is that in effect. We allow men to protest things in private, who, when these same things are challenged in public in their presence, act the lie: they give the consent of their silence; they hold themselves dispensed because of their secret faith; they make a virtue of double-facedness——

Doyle. Stop!

Hugh. Hear me out. I've a case in point. You saw Kiely was at the opening of that temperance bazaar last week and spoke an absurd eulogy of the lord mayor, knowing the kind of man the lord mayor is: this week he writes a scurrilous anonymous attack on him for his latest Empire speech. Why, if he would not challenge him openly, should he seize an occasion to cover him with grotesque praise? He could at least have kept silent. And if his courage now is equal to no more than an anonymous letter, why not write a decent letter?

Doyle (checked by the mention of Kiely, speaks sharply). If you fasten on the indefensible action of one man, you can upset any movement.

Hugh. Kiely is a creation of the policy.

Doyle. Listen to me. I've spoken pretty plainly of such things before now, and I mean to bring that matter to a head and have it settled. But you make the absurd proposal that because of an occasional lapse we're to make our whole affairs public, what we mean to do, and how, when, and where we mean to do it. Man, it's childish.

Hugh. Not so fast, Doyle. There's a line to draw. I hope we'll use our common sense. But on your side you seem blind to the gravest danger——

Doyle. What danger?

Hugh. This secrecy creates false confidence. Men who by their want of character and courage, even of ordinary good sense, are utterly unfit for places of trust, yet hold such places—you know it.

Doyle (constrained). Well?

Hugh. We rely on men who accommodate themselves to public convenience. I don't care a straw for their secret allegiance. Let them prove themselves in the open.

Doyle. We can have both the secret and the public test. Why suggest the one excludes the other?

Hugh. It strikes deeper than we seem to realise. A movement must be judged by the characters it makes. When we are open, we attract the straight-forward fighter, and in the end he's always the best fighter: when we are secret, we attract the men of mystery and dark confidences, who are both ridiculous and dangerous.

Doyle (with irritation). Do you suppose the average man whom we want to enlist will listen to this talk?

Hugh (as if uninterrupted). I was up the country the other day, and one of our latest recruits accosted me. He should give me what he thought "the grip." The way he went about shaking hands would arouse anyone's suspicion. I had a pain in the back of my hand for five minutes after him. (*Doyle looks annoyed. Con, who has been silently attentive, laughs outright.*) It's no laughing matter, Con.

Doyle (angrily). Will you build your case on the action of a fool?

Hugh. Ireland is in small danger from traitors, but in grievous danger from fools.

Doyle. We must take obvious precautions against both.

Hugh. Don't you find it ironical? We charge everyone with fear. Because I don't take the conventional revolutionist's view of the secret society, I've been charged with fear. And the simple truth is we as a body are afraid to come into the open.

Doyle. What do you mean?

Hugh. Simply, this secret policy is one of fear.

Doyle (with increased anger, approaching Hugh). O'Neill, I warn you, if you take this line——

Con (interposing). Don't quarrel. There's no offence in looking at it from every side, Doyle.

Hugh (friendly). Doyle, I asked you to come here, feeling we could speak freely to each other. I want you to see the significance of something you may overlook—something that won't appear at a meeting.

Doyle (the aggressive manner passes). I also have reason for insistence. I hear on very good authority that Father O'Hanlon is going to denounce us. Now, I don't agree to have our work in the open, where whoever may choose can at his leisure attack it.

Hugh. If we're to be attacked, the sooner the better, and in the open is the best place.

Doyle. Oh, I'm for forcing the fight with the priests, as you know.

Hugh. If Father O'Hanlon oversteps his line, we'll meet him.

Doyle. I'm sick of these nice distinctions. It's as a priest he has power, and as such we must attack him.

Hugh. Where he's wrong, making the distinction is the surest way of defeating him.

Doyle. He won't let you.

Hugh. That's in our hands, not his.

Doyle. Fight him on his own ground.

Hugh. Bad generalship—choose your ground.

Doyle. Threaten his whole authority and you'll bring him to his senses.

Hugh. We should part company there.

Doyle. O'Neill, if you want to work a revolution, you can't be so careful of your orthodoxy.

Hugh. Doyle, anyone can start a revolution; only orthodox people can carry it through.

Doyle (arrested). You let your imagination run away with you. I'll attack Father O'Hanlon wherever I get a chance.

Hugh. If you attack him as a priest, he, with the help of sincerely religious people, can put you down and pride himself on his action. If I attack him as a politician he may call me plausible and even more dangerous; and deceiving people he may also put me down. But when we're both wiped out he can justify himself in your case; he can't in mine. At that point a change is inevitable.

Doyle (drily). You appear to take his wiping us both out more calmly than I will.

Hugh (with a smile). When I tell him I'm a believer he may say I'm throwing dust in his eyes: that will come right in time. For the moment I'm more concerned that *we* should understand each other. When we win our freedom, there will be many things to settle.

Doyle. What we've on hands is quite enough for the present.

Hugh. I take freedom not as an end but a beginning.

Doyle. Well, let us get to the beginning (*moving*).

Hugh. Yes; but it's well to think of what will follow. I'm glad we've had this talk.

Doyle. It's time there was some serious talk. Our generation has had too much dancing, excursions and frivolity. The fellows are losing a capacity for fight. (*They all move.*)

Hugh (in lighter vein). Oh, the best of revolutionists were always gay fellows. (*A lighter mood comes over them all.*)

Con. Yes, Doyle, they felt the need of the fun.

Doyle. They never forgot the main thing.

Con. You could combine both. We can't be grimly doing duty all the time. The heart must have its say.

Hugh (to Doyle). You should be catholic in your sympathies—ready for a flirtation or a bullet at a moment's notice. (*Con begins "or—" and desists. Doyle turns to him.*)

Doyle. I hear you're going to be married. (*Con smiles.*) That explains you. (*He gives a puzzled look at Hugh.*)

Hugh. I wish you'd fall in love, Doyle. 'Twould make you much more sympathetic.

Doyle (pauses at the door, drily to Hugh). By your talk, you'll be the next to come down. (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VII

HUGH AND CON.

Con. Well?

Hugh. He's set on his point; but the talk will do good.

Con. I was afraid of a row.

Hugh. If we're straight, a row is no harm. It leaves no sting.

Con. I've something on my mind.

Hugh (smiling). Yes. Let us speak of this responsibility you've put on me.

Con. The marriage will be to-morrow fortnight—and, by the way, Fan has changed her mind about her bridesmaid.

Hugh (a little surprised). Yes?

Con. She thought I would have my brother to support me. When I mentioned you, she said she wouldn't have Eileen either.

Hugh. Who then?

Con. Nora Mangan.

Hugh. Won't Eileen be annoyed?

Con. No. She understands Fan.

Hugh. Naturally, Fan must be free to choose.

Con. She asked me would you come out to-morrow evening to talk over things.

Hugh. With pleasure.

Con (smiling slightly). She's curious about you.

Hugh. How?

Con. Do you never think of marrying?

Hugh. Now and then.

Con (drily). You're non-committal.

Hugh. Oh, don't worry. My turn may come soon.

Con. You must go to meet it.

Hugh. Perhaps. It's a problem to think on.

Con. I promised to meet Fan. I must be off.

(Going.)

Hugh. Tell her I'll come to-morrow evening.

Con (at the door). A happy solution to your thinking.

Hugh. Thanks. *(Con goes out. Hugh sits, thinking. There is silence a moment; a knock; Father O'Connor comes.)*

SCENE VIII

HUGH AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Father O'Connor. Alone.

Hugh (rising). Welcome back.

Father O'Connor. What's on your mind?

Hugh. It's rumoured Father O'Hanlon is threatening a pronouncement about extremists.

Father O'Connor. He often talks in that vein in a general way.

Hugh. It's not a general way now.

Father O'Connor. Indeed.

Hugh. I think so. Could you find out and give me a hint?

Father O'Connor (guarded). Perhaps. Father O'Hanlon will probably mention it to me, if he means to make it official.

Hugh. Owing to your absence from Ireland, we've not had a good talk since the new era of good-will was inaugurated.

Father O'Connor. I gathered you distrust it.

Hugh. Very much.

Father O'Connor. I shall be more in touch with things now. I've been fortunate in getting attached to this parish—my first in Ireland.

Hugh. While at a distance, you've been deceived by appearances.

Father O'Connor. I'm glad to have your opinion. In England the feeling is certainly for peace—to let us manage for ourselves with, of course, the implied reservations.

Hugh. There will be no peace till there is independence.

Father O'Connor. Are you disturbed at getting an extension of power?

Hugh. No; it all leads to the main thing. But in a burst of good-will people often lose their balance, and the situation just now is critical. You will hear the same vague talk of peace all over Ireland, in drawing-rooms, clubs, and all sorts of places—but beneath it is unrest.

Father O'Connor. And you seemed to count on it, which surprised me. But the opposition is, after all, from only a few and hardly dangerous.

Hugh. The situation will always be as dangerous as the few care to make it.

Father O'Connor (uneasy). You certainly disturb one's composure.

Hugh. I want to prepare you for some things. Father O'Hanlon must be met.

Father O'Connor (constrained). It's a difficult position.

Hugh. We must not evade it.

Father O'Connor. What would you do?

Hugh. For myself, I would go and have it out with him.

Father O'Connor. That would anger him and prejudice him against you.

Hugh. Is the deciding factor then to be not the right of the thing but the fear of angering him and prejudicing me?

Father O'Connor. The position is delicate.

Hugh (seeing the priest's growing constraint). There are problems to settle. If we don't settle them the right way, others will try the wrong way, and the responsibility for the mischief done will be largely ours.

Father O'Connor (troubled). That's a danger. But what do you mean exactly by having it out with Father O'Hanlon?

Hugh. Make him realize that ill-considered tirades about revolutionists only foment and spread mischief.

Father O'Connor. But there are revolutionists abroad.

Hugh. "Love your neighbour" is a command that, if observed, would work a revolution.

Father O'Connor. That is true.

Hugh. Should we repudiate the man who advocates it as a revolutionist?

Father O'Connor. You give your own meaning to the word.

Hugh. There is the other meaning, I know. I'm not unconcerned but more concerned. We must be exact.

Father O'Connor. Yes.

Hugh. Any politician Father O'Hanlon dislikes, he calls a revolutionist; anyone who criticizes a priest, an atheist: then he freely brands both as blackguards and does more mischief than he will ever undo.

Father O'Connor. He is often unjust. But remember the numbers who write and say scurrilous things. He thinks it practical to generalize.

Hugh. Practical! He convinces his enemies he's an unscrupulous foe, and his friends that he's an unsafe guide.

Father O'Connor. But you don't realize how unbelief is growing. You should be in England——

Hugh. One thing at least we can do for the unbeliever, inspire him with respect for those who believe. We do the reverse.

Father O'Connor. I think you take the common type of revolutionist too lightly.

Hugh. I've met a few of them. You must come nearer. There's much nonsense spoken in the name; but it covers almost inconceivable timidity. Men speak of a forward movement who never move and never will move. We must take the lead and give the word a meaning.

Father O'Connor. I think you go too far.

Hugh. That's our one cry to these men—men who judge everything by the little circle they see and go wrong inevitably: then its either deadlock, retreat, or burst-up; never advance. We have the wider vision; unless we shut our eyes, we can see farther: we ought to go farther. It should be for us to challenge.

Father O'Connor (his constraint is passing). I thought everything was quiet. I seem to have stepped to the edge of an eruption.

Hugh. Life is a divine adventure, and the man whose faith is finest will go farthest.

Father O'Connor. But we must take thought for the future.

Hugh. God is in the future beckoning. Whoever stands still, denies Him.

Father O'Connor (taking his fire). You are daring.

Hugh. No man can be true, who is not daring.

Father O'Connor. That is surely a forward challenge.

Hugh. If we don't go forward, we must go down.

Father O'Connor. I envy you your courage, Hugh.

Hugh. Jack, that's the talk to bring me up with a pull. Are you afraid to take the consequences? I'm afraid *not* to take them. That is, perhaps, the only difference.

Father O'Connor. You have not the accent of fear.

(The remark strikes Hugh and gives him pause a moment.)

Hugh. It's one of Life's compensations.

Father O'Connor. And you feared I was slackening from the old enthusiasm?

Hugh. It has happened.

Father O'Connor. You were right.

Hugh. My words, then, were of service.

Father O'Connor. Whatever the issue, I shall remain your debtor. *(Moving.)*

Hugh. Must you go?

Father O'Connor. Yes—on duty. If I hear of trouble in the wind, I shall let you know.

Hugh. I shall expect to hear.

Father O'Connor. Someone is coming.

(Knock. Con and Fan enter.)

SCENE IX

HUGH, FATHER O'CONNOR, CON, AND FAN.

(A flush of brightness comes over the scene.)

Hugh. Welcome.

Con. Here I'm back, Hugh. Fan should call.

Fan. Good-day, Father O'Connor. You're not going?

Father O'Connor. I've overstayed my time——

Fan. You must come over to us to-morrow evening.

Father O'Connor. I shall be delighted.

Hugh *(to Fan)*. You want to talk of the great event?

Fan. What else?

Father O'Connor. I must run.

Fan. You won't fail?

Father O'Connor. Rely on me.

Fan. Thanks.

Father O'Connor. Good-bye all for the present.

Fan. Good-bye.

(Father O'Connor goes.)

SCENE X

HUGH, CON, AND FAN.

Hugh *(curious and smiling)*. Fan, you're bubbling over with excitement. *(Her manner is merry and challenging.)*

Con. You don't know what's before you.

Fan. Men have no appreciation. I shall have to stick pins in him to move him. Hugh, I want to impress on you not to fail to-morrow evening.

Hugh. I could not possibly.

Fan. There are some things to talk over.

Hugh. Of course.

Con (to Fan). Come to the point.

Fan. Be quiet. Hugh, did he tell you of my change of plans for bridesmaid?

Hugh. Yes.

Fan. You don't mind?

Hugh (with surprise). I—why should I mind?

Fan. I wanted to explain.

Hugh. But why explain?

Con. There's no need to explain—not the slightest; but she must explain. Don't interrupt. Let her do it all at once.

Fan. He's very trying sometimes.

Hugh. His privilege—proceed.

Fan. I meant to have Eileen—of course you know about Eileen and Dr. Foley?

Hugh. I suspect.

Con (in a murmur). Admirable cover. (*Fan gives him a look of rebuke.*)

Fan. Eileen pretends nothing. But it's quite obvious Dr. Foley's a hopeless case.

Hugh. We all know Foley's in love.

Fan. Yes: the poor fellow can't pretend he's not. You know the way people couple the names of bridesmaid and best man. If Eileen and you did duty for us, poor Dr. Foley would be utterly miserable. He's not reasonable, you know. I told him that always happens—people merely smile—no one minds. He said it sometimes sticks.

Hugh (with a smile a little suspicious). And you put his mind at rest.

Fan. But is it not absurd how people talk?

Hugh. It's the people's way.

Fan. I was in a dilemma. Eileen enjoyed it. 'Twas she suggested Nora Mangan. She said Nora and you would make a charming couple that would take the shine out of us.

Con. Fan—do come.

Fan. But you understand about Dr. Foley and Eileen?

Hugh. I've said so.

Fan. It is embarrassing how people talk.

Con. Fan!

Fan. He's hopelessly rude. You'll be punctual to-morrow evening?—Nora's coming.

Hugh. I'll be punctual.

Fan. By the way, is it not a miss? The Empire Carnival will be in our wedding-week. All Dublin will be *en fête* and we shall be out of it.

Con. A great satisfaction!

Fan. He pretends if he were here he would not go.

Hugh. Do you think he would?

Fan. I'd make him.

Con. Hugh, there's another fight ahead.

Fan (*feigned surprise*). Do you pretend you won't go?

Hugh. What do you think?

Fan. Oh, I suppose if by yourself you'd stay away—but the wedding party's going *en masse*.

Hugh. Then I shan't be missed.

Fan. The pretence!

Con. Be prepared, Hugh.

Fan. The side-shows will be no good—but the crowds, and the life, and the music!—Nora told me she heard that famous German Band in Munich, and would go the length of Ireland to hear it again. She thinks the Carnival won't be here soon enough. You won't go to hear the music?

Hugh. Wait and see.

Fan. Oh, you people with anti-Empire notions think you can't leave the straight path.—You wouldn't step aside to hear a bit of music?

Hugh. Thousands have done it.

Fan (*merrily*). There! I knew it.

Hugh. Wait and see.

Fan (*Con takes her arm to bring her out*). You pretend you won't. (*Releasing herself from Con*.) You'd part and walk off by yourself? (*Coming nearer to Hugh*.) You'll go in.

Hugh. Who knows?

Fan. Thousands have done it.

Hugh. We shall see.

(*Con comes and takes Fan's arm and marches her out. She's laughing merrily back at Hugh, who stands in the centre looking at her with a quiet smile.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

PLACE. *At Fan O'Byrne's House.*

SCENE I

FAN AND NORA.

(They are sitting, busy with Fan's preparations. At the moment they are working initials into handkerchiefs.)

Nora. Are you forgetting anything, Fan?

Fan. I'm sure to forget something.

Nora. Think.

Fan. Can't.

Nora. Don't worry, I've the list. I'll look it over.

Fan. You're an angel. By the way, Nora.

Nora. Yes.

Fan. Hugh was quite agreeable about the change of bridesmaid.

Nora. He could hardly object, could he?

Fan (with a smile). No; but 'twas quite apparent that story about Doctor Foley was a story.

Nora. Yes, I thought so.

Fan. What did you think?

Nora. You won't be hurt?

Fan. Oh, no.

Nora. 'Twas rather common-place.

Fan. Oh, I wanted to be obvious.—Nora, I can imagine the delicate way you'd insinuate your point.

Nora. But what was the point?

Fan (evading it). Doctor Foley is not quite so foolish.

Nora (overlooking the evasion). Some men in love are foolish enough for anything.

Fan. Hugh was not deceived.

Nora (with a tone of unconcern but a quick look at Fan that would betray her detached manner. Fan does not see it). Did he say so?

Fan. No—too astute for that. But he guessed.

Nora. Guessed what?

Fan (with a laugh). I'll tell you some other time.

Nora (her eyes now rest on Fan curiously). You're very illusive this evening.

Fan. I've a grievance against you.

Nora. A grievance!

Fan. I've told you all my love affairs from the first—every change of fortune to the last rapture; and you never tell me a word of yours, any more than if I were a man.

Nora. There's nothing to tell.

Fan. Were you never in love?

Nora. Often.

Fan. I don't mean your flirtations.

Nora. I've had nothing else.

Fan. Nora!

Nora. Yes.

Fan. I don't believe you.

Nora. Thanks.

Fan. Be frank.

Nora. Why—so I am.

Fan (in a more confidential tone). Tell me, would you not like to marry—a nice fellow, of course, a fellow you could be really fond of? (*Nora smiles, no answer.*) You're very nasty, Nora.—And all I've told you. Suppose a genuinely nice fellow, sterling, with all the qualities, one you could trust—you'd marry him, surely?

Nora (indecisive). No.

Fan (prompt). That's a very unsettled no.

Nora. Fan, I know you're very fond of Con; but

wouldn't you like to dance with any other nice fellow that comes the way?

Fan. What a question!

Nora. Oh, I've always had such a horror of fickle people!—it came with a shock that I'm fickle myself. Isn't it terrible? But I must be. I can easily imagine myself falling in love, still I'm sure if another nice fellow came the way I'd like to dance with him. That's fickleness, isn't it?

Fan. Nora, you're laughing at me.

Nora. No, really.

Fan. What of all your fine ideas of the Romance?

Nora. I believe in the Romance steadily. I hope Con and you'll keep it alive for ever.

Fan. You nasty thing, you speak as if you thought twouldn't live a twelve month. (*She purposely mis-reads Nora to draw her to intimacy and succeeds.*)

Nora. I'm sure 'twill. Do you know I'm quite eager about it?

Fan. Yes?

Nora. I admit I feel depressed when I think of all our old school-chums who're married—they seem as if somehow they got leaden feet; and the fine dreams we used to have—vanished!

Fan. Would it save the dream if they danced with every fellow that came the way.

Nora. It's rather intricate, isn't it? Oh, I could never explain myself to a man.—But if we were happy, 'twould be like wings to the feet.

Fan. Some of our school-chums who're settled down certainly have not wings to their feet.

Nora. Do you know I've watched them, secretly anxious? It always begins in a splendid glow, but the romance fades, sometimes so quickly. Everything is ideal—till they marry; then there's a gradual departing of the light.

Fan. Yes?

Nora. How is it? Who's to blame? Someone

must be. Is it the man or woman? Perhaps both.

Fan. Perhaps.

Nora (*unexpectedly back to her light mood*). But I've great hopes for you and Con. When I see you out together, Fan, you always look as if you were going to a hurling match.

Fan. Well, Nora!

Nora. You know what I mean. When I see other couples, they look as if they were going to get their photographs taken. But we can't live in photo-frames.

Fan. You're getting quite flippant. It's my opinion you've lost the old idea yourself.

Nora. You know, Fan, I'll always be a profound believer in the old dream.

Fan. Then you seem to have new ways of looking at it.

Nora. You can't help having fresh ideas about it: and mine seem one queerer than another.

Fan. Tell me the last.

Nora. You'd never understand.

Fan. Oh, I shall.

Nora. I can't understand it, myself.

Fan. We'll puzzle it out together.

Nora. It must be nothing hazy. There's a goal in the dream—to get back to the Eden that was lost at the Fall,—here, I mean, not waiting to die.

Fan. Yes.

Nora. We must pay for its having been lost, of course. That means effort, tremendous effort, and pain, terrible pain. They had it without effort or pain in the beginning—there's the difference. But when two begin now they get the strength and their opportunity, and could get the whole way back.

Fan. Yes.

Nora. I don't mean, merely, to save their souls. Plenty of common-place people do that. But to fill

Heaven with the glory of first surprise; to justify God for Eden; to remove the reproaches of the angels—that's to be fit for Heaven.

Fan (a little bewildered). I can't follow.

Nora (into the light mood again with a laugh). I don't know what I'm saying half my time.

Fan. Oh, do go on.

Nora. It's too foolish. Come, finish up. (*Rising.*) I've worked the names into all these handkerchiefs while you're doing one. When you talk, you do nothing.

Fan. I envy you your dexterity. You can work your fingers like your brain. But finish what you were saying—I interrupted. Remember, Nora, I'm getting hints.

Nora (lightly, smiling at Fan). Perhaps only to worry you with the puzzle, as I've worried myself. (*Fan does not reply, and in a moment as if unconsciously Nora is in grave mood again.*) Eden in pain: it's the burden of the dream. People don't want love on such conditions. Let the dream go, they cry. Then everything is common-place, comfortable, and sensual; and the spirit sleeps. The animal craves, is fed, glutted, satisfied—ugh!

(*With a little shiver.*)

Fan. Nora!

Nora. You won't give up, Fan? I would. That's why I'm afraid.

Fan. You'd never speak like that unless there was someone——

Nora (moving away, indignant). Oh, you've been simply drawing me the whole time.

Fan (rising and following, quick and warm). No, no, listen. I confess I lost you at times as if you'd walked into the heart of the sun; but in a dim way we all feel like that—hidden dread—you know it.

Nora. Yes.

Fan. When the time comes, you'll risk it.

Nora. Never.

Fan. When it comes to the point, you will.

Nora. Then it won't come to the point.

Fan. Don't be too sure. You know it's not when you're sentimental, you're in love. But you may not know it will have you by the heart, even while you're laughing at it.

Nora. How could that be?

Fan. I found it so. I never suspected till someone told me *he* was going to be married. I went all cold. The thought of the loss struck my senses to reality. 'Twas a rumour only and passed; but—I knew.

Nora (*with feeling*). You have the secret, Fan.

Fan. Don't mind me. There's something you won't tell.

Nora (*tripping away lightly*). I'm heart-free.

Fan (*dubious*). Do you think so?

Nora. Then you won't allow me to judge!

Fan. You're not the sort of girl to escape.

Nora (*laughing softly*). Fan—(*and she stops.*)

Fan. You're a puzzle, Nora. Utterly gay in men's company; yet you keep them all at arm's length.

Nora. They're best at arm's length.

Fan. May no one come nearer? (*Nora's only answer is a laugh.*) There!—that appeals to you. Come, describe him—just to humour me.

Nora (*laughing*). To humour you, then. Not a fine figure of a man—good though it be—nothing you can buy. He should be passionate—pure passionate is the true beautiful. (*Unconsciously she slips again into the intimate mood.*) Not Eden altogether for me, Fan. I'd never go right in—I see we must marry. It's not Eden, unless it's irrevocable. I'd be afraid. But to have the breath and the breaking light, the touch, the fire, the pure kiss of it once, and before it might pass—thank God and die.

Fan (in a tremble). Don't say that, Nora. I don't like it.

Nora (smiling unconcern). That's what I should ask.

Fan (unaccountably upset). Don't ask it. Suppose Death took him.

Nora (with surprise and sympathy). Have I upset you, Fan? And I came to help. Come, come.

Fan (quickly herself, with an apologetic smile). I felt a little shiver.

Nora (in a wave of feeling, comes softly to Fan, arms around her, whispers). I'm sorry—this day fortnight—Eden.

(They are silent. Pause; knock. Hugh and Con come.)

SCENE II

NORA, FAN, HUGH, AND CON.

(Hugh and Con pause in a little surprise, observing the others.)

Con. Hallo,—secrets?

Fan (tripping over to Con). In the flesh. *(Pinching him—he exclaims.)* So am I. What a relief!

Hugh. What's the mystery.

Fan. Nora's been setting up such a high standard of love, she actually won't let us live. We must rise to a very ecstasy—and die. She won't even let us, like Elias, go up alive to Heaven in a fiery chariot. No, we must die *(to Con)*, die *(turning to Hugh)* and go out the white cold gate—ugh! Hugh, I think I must change my bridesmaid again.

Hugh. It's only the groom that matters.

Fan (to Nora). Not complimentary to you.

Nora. I like him to be frank.

Hugh. Fan has not a notion of changing.

Fan. He's dangerous—knows too much—beware, Nora.

Nora. People who know too much are never dangerous. They always trip.

Con. One to you, Nora.

Hugh. I won't let Fan write my character—yet, I'd like her to tell me one thing.

Fan (merry significance). One thing!

Hugh (amused, evasive). A thousand and one things.

Fan. One thing! Mark it, Nora.

Nora. She's on a mystery hunt to-day.

Fan. Let it pass. (*To Hugh.*) I forgot to tell Nora one thing.

Hugh. What—the wedding-tour?

Fan. No—the Empire Carnival.

Con. Oh, drop it.

Nora. Fan, tell me.

Fan. Yes: the wedding party's going *en masse*. So you can have the full of your heart of the music.

Nora. What fun—all together?

Hugh. With perhaps an exception or two.

Fan. No!

Nora. Surely not. Who?

Hugh. Ask Fan.

Fan. He has not the courage to say himself. I was right in assuming he'd never stick to it.

Nora (to Hugh). Why so reticent?

Hugh (with a smile). Fan will explain.

Fan. He hasn't even the pluck to explain.

Con. I bar the explanation. We're here to talk of something else.

Fan. Everything else is settled.

Nora. And I'm sure I'd like to know all about the other.

Fan. Especially since they both want to hide it.

Nora. It must be good.

Hugh (*he enjoys their persistence*). If we speak freely about it, you'll rate us deadly bores. Because we want to avoid it, you'll speak of nothing else.

Fan (*to Nora*). The others will be coming. Let them be; but we'll have it out. Come. (*Moving.*)

Nora. Yes—and you'll tell me?

Con. Not afraid of knowing too much, Nora?

Fan. And their assurance!

Nora. Yes: wouldn't you like to upset their confidence?

Con. The woman's instinct.

Nora. Oh!

Fan. I hear.

Hugh. The man's danger.

Fan. Come.

Nora. We'll be quits. (*Nora and Fan go in a gay mood.*)

SCENE III

HUGH AND CON.

(*Their manner becomes more serious.*)

Con. I'm afraid you'll have trouble over that Carnival.

Hugh. I wish everything was as easily settled.

Con. Don't take it too lightly.

Hugh. I think of the bigger trouble.

Con. Have you seen Father O'Connor since, or heard anything?

Hugh. No—but he'll come this evening?

Con. Yes.

Hugh. He may have heard how things are moving.

Con. Foley is coming, too.

Hugh. I've not seen him since he got that job.

Con. Were you surprised he proved so weak?

Hugh. I knew he was weak, but never thought he'd sink so low.

Con. He wanted to secure the job—he's thinking of marriage, too.

Hugh. Most fellows go wrong at that point.

Con. He'll have an explanation.

Hugh. That's the worst of it. When the evil's done, they won't admit it's evil, but try to prove it virtuous.

Con. Fellows would be straight but for the influences and cross-currents.

Hugh. That's why we must stiffen our backs for every occasion. (*Knock. Father O'Connor comes.*)

SCENE IV

HUGH, CON, AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Hugh. We were just talking of you.

Con. Any news?

Father O'Connor. Yes—rather disquieting.

Hugh. Father O'Hanlon's intentions?

Father O'Connor. Yes; I was speaking to him.

Hugh. Well?

Father O'Connor. You must be careful, Hugh.

Hugh. I!

Father O'Connor. He means to denounce someone and seems to be bitter against you. He has been following things rather closely.

Hugh. Bitter against me!

Father O'Connor. Yes. He was quite friendly and chatty last night, but I found him very sharp this morning. A talk arose out of some report he had read which angered him; and he spoke in his general way of anti-clerics and atheists. I objected to his branding Nationalists in this manner and he turned on me: I mentioned the names of some I

knew and trusted, among others you. The simple mentioning of your name made him quite furious.

Hugh. Yes?

Father O'Connor. He warned me against you.

Con. That's coming close.

Father O'Connor (uneasy). He was in no way communicative, but I confess I felt uneasy.

Hugh. We must speak out straight and soon.

Father O'Connor. Remember—be careful.

Hugh. Yes, careful—and resolute.

Father O'Connor. I felt there was more behind.

Con. You may be sure of it.

Hugh. We'll have to be open, direct, and vigorous. Trying to find easy solutions of every difficulty is the cause of all our weaknesses and palliations—While waiting for you, we were talking of Foley. You heard he got that job as medical officer?

Father O'Connor. Yes.

Hugh. Did you hear how?

Father O'Connor. No.

Hugh. Political influences were brought into the fight and his opponent was winning. Foley, to save himself, denied his own previous convictions and won by his change of front.

Father O'Connor. That's bad.

Hugh. The details are worse. (*Knock.*)

Con. Foley's coming. That's probably he. (*Con opens door. Foley enters.*)

SCENE V

HUGH, CON, FATHER O'CONNOR, AND FOLEY.

Foley (gaily). Good evening, all. Conspiracy on foot, eh?

Con (drily). Waiting for you to begin, Foley.

Foley. Not sarcastic, I hope, Sheehan.

Con (ignoring his remark). You're a bit late.

Foley. Several people should stop to congratulate me on getting that job.

Father O'Connor. I heard of your success.

Foley (a touch of challenge). O'Neill won't congratulate me.

Hugh. We all hoped you'd get it, Foley. On your merits as a medical man you should. But I can't congratulate you on the steps you took to secure it.

Foley (testy). These things are necessary.

Hugh. Why should you assume a straightforward course would fail?

Foley. I want no insinuations about my course.

Hugh. I don't insinuate. I said frankly I can't congratulate you.

Father O'Connor (interposing). Don't quarrel.

Foley (a touch of anger). Is a man's success an offence?

Con. Foley, you in a measure challenged O'Neill.

Hugh. Let us leave it.

Foley. No—talk it out. I spoke to some of your own extreme friends beforehand, and they approved of my attitude.

Hugh. I don't agree with some of my friends about these things and they know it.

Foley. You must have sympathizers everywhere and diplomacy is necessary to win these posts.

Hugh. If naked denial of beliefs is diplomacy, then diplomacy is a very bad thing.

Father O'Connor. Need we pursue it now?

Foley (magnanimously). I won't get angry. I admire O'Neill's views but his attitude is impossible if we're to live. I don't mind saying in confidence among friends I've no taste for a bachelor life and have notions of settling down. I could not settle down without improving my position. Suppose it was your own case, O'Neill?

Hugh. Why argue it now? You've taken your course. If it were my case, I should take mine.

Foley. I doubt it. It's not so easy as you seem to think. (*Nora appears at the door. She notices they are in serious conversation and pauses. They don't see her.*)

Hugh. I never suggested it was easy. (*Nora comes forward.*)

SCENE VI

HUGH, CON, FATHER O'CONNOR, FOLEY, AND NORA.

Nora (*bright when she appeared, she puts on admirable gravity in coming forward, but there is beneath it the suggestion of lurking fun*). Have I come at the wrong time? You all look so grave.

Foley (*gallant*). Just at the right time. Men forget the romance of life, till the woman appears.

Hugh (*suddenly easy and unconstrained*). Come—some of us don't forget. Speak for yourself, Foley. (*The air of constraint passes from them all.*)

Father O'Connor. You've at least relieved the situation.

Con (*drily*). Wait and see.

Nora. You are nasty.

Hugh. Con is fond of his joke. Your presence is most opportune—to restore harmony.

Nora. How happy!

Foley. Yes; for the situation was quite disagreeable and wholly his fault. I'm prepared to leave the matter to your judgment.

Nora. I've heard how unsympathetic he can be.

Foley. Chasing the impossible.

Nora. Well—I like some impossible things.

Father O'Connor (*to Hugh*). There—a common bond.

Nora. No inferences, please,

Hugh. Yet inferences are natural things.

Con. You were sent to summon us, Nora?

Nora. No digression, please.

Foley. There—they want to dodge, while I'm ready to see it out.

Nora. Yes—and they must see it out.

(Fan appears, comes forward, looking indignation at Nora.)

SCENE VII

HUGH, CON, FATHER O'CONNOR, FOLEY, NORA AND
FAN.

Fan. Nora!

Nora (with a little laugh). Oh, Fan.

Fan. A nice way to summon people.

Con. I suspected—and she actually hushed me up.

Nora. I found them in a grave dispute and could not break it rudely.

Fan. I should have known her—when I thought of it, I followed.

Nora. How impatient she is.

Fan. You men should not encourage her. She comes skipping to a crowd of you, but won't attach herself to any man.

Hugh. Won't there be excitement when she comes down!

Nora. Indeed!

Fan. You should boycott her.

Foley. No, emphatically. I will defend her. She came to my defence.

Fan. Ah, I see. The politicians were at it.

Nora. Yes—

Foley. And they wanted to close the discussion, which I would not allow. We must widen their sympathies,

Fan. They need it.

Foley. They're too hard. What they lack is the sweetening influence of woman.

Fan. You hear, Hugh?

(Father O'Connor retires quietly and sits in the background.)

Hugh (with sudden and hearty laughter at Foley, and complete change of manner). Foley knows nothing about us. Some of our ardent spirits think it's too much of the sweetening influence we get.

Nora. You don't say so!

Hugh. Yes—even to frivolity. It's notorious politicians are great lovers. All our men are either getting married, thinking of getting married, or wanting to get married——

Fan. In which group do you appear?

Hugh. I forgot—there are a few left over, of which I am one. We watch the happy procession.

Nora. Oh, these detached people.

Hugh. Not detached—perhaps waiting with hope for a chance to join in.

Foley. I don't believe it, O'Neill. You've no sympathy.

Hugh. On the contrary, we watch the happy procession with the greatest sympathy. Now, there's—I won't mention names—but we followed his faithful pilgrimage nightly to the door of his lady till the first great night he entered. How we appreciated the delicate advance in the situation for the happy lover, who, having gone on many pilgrimages to the house of his beloved, on one memorable and sacred occasion first went in!

Con (drily). Don't say too much.

Hugh. We felt the importance of the hour, when the family circle first widened to receive him.

Fan. You keep your eyes open—it's clear. I've heard rumours I did not credit, but——

Nora. We'll be prepared for anything.

Foley. I caught the word frivolity. I draw the line there. I admit if you like to being sentimental on the point——

Hugh. Foley, I'm surprised at you. Sentimental people ought not to be admitted to any decent company.

Nora. He should be married to a suffragette.

Foley (quickly). No—see: you think me a blind admirer. There I'll admit a flaw. I admit women are not fitted for politics.

Nora. Why?

Foley. They jump at conclusions.

Nora. While the man walks around the conclusion and runs away from it.

Foley (there is a laugh at him. He is confused). Now——

Hugh. I object to politics. Foley, that little passage from Shakespeare on music—adapt it for gaiety. The man that hath not gaiety in his soul, "is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils; the motions of his spirit are dull as night, and his affections dark as Erebus: let no such man be trusted."

Fan. Come—he merely wishes to plead for singleness of the affections.

Foley. Right, Fan. Thanks for the timely word.

Hugh. But if you love one person properly, you'll love everybody incidentally.

Fan. Oh!

Foley. I know that sort—write poetry to one, and have your fling with the rest.

Hugh. Isn't that the key to the mystery? You must have your fling with the whole universe.

Nora (taken with the point, aside to Fan, gaily). It would explain some things.

Fan. Nora!

Con (to Hugh). I know you'll say too much,

Fan (to *Nora*, taking in *Hugh* with a look). Have you been comparing notes? (*Nora* merely laughs. *Fan* turns to *Foley*.) We'll have to thank you for discoveries.

Foley. Would you have believed it of him?

Fan. You'd have thought he'd stand by first love.

Hugh. Of course I do. I can easily imagine a man falling violently in love at twenty and marrying his first love at forty.—But I can't imagine him not looking at a girl all the years between.

Foley. Think of that from O'Neill!

Hugh. And then, may not a great book have an introduction?

Fan. You're opening our eyes.

Hugh. The introduction is often a very delightful introduction which we don't want to forget. But it's not the book.

Fan. Well—I am mystified.

Nora (whispers to *Fan*, who turns laughing to the others, at which *Nora* protests). No, you must not repeat it, *Fan*.

Con. Whispering forbidden. For penalty we'll have it out.

Fan. Yes.

Nora. No.

Fan (to *Hugh*). What she said is most interesting, and, I suspect, true.

Hugh. Oh, let us have it.

Fan. That you'd never have such a thought, unless you'd been through both the introduction and the book.

Foley. He certainly would not know so much about it unless he'd burned his fingers.

Con. I knew you'd do it.

(They are all laughing at *Hugh*. *Father O'Connor* comes forward.)

Fan (aside to *Foley*). Eileen won't be in—had to

go to town—but she told me she'd be at the Library.

Foley. Thanks.

Fan. She's thoughtful.

Foley. She's an angel. (*Turning hastily to the others.*) I've stayed too long, really. I must run. Excuse me, all. (*To Fan.*) Thanks again. (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VIII

HUGH, CON, FATHER O'CONNOR, NORA, FAN.

Con. What's the sudden hurry?

Fan. I told him where he'd find Eileen.

Hugh. That explains.

Fan. Father O'Connor, you are patient.

Father O'Connor. When Foley began on romance, I was pushed into the background. I'd have fled but for fear of offending you.

Fan. You're too kind.

Father O'Connor. Still it's interesting to watch from the background. This complication is bound to arise——

Hugh. Foley's is an obvious case.

Father O'Connor. True, but while we're amused at the obvious, it strikes us suddenly and strangely elsewhere—there it's interesting. Now, I was prepared for some things—but——

Nora. It's better fun to track it, where you least expect it.

Fan. It's not always fun, Nora.

Con (to Fan). Since Foley has fled, why not move us?

Fan. Yes—lead the way. We'll appropriate Hugh.

Hugh. Thanks. (*Con and Father O'Connor go out.*)

SCENE IX

HUGH, NORA, FAN.

Fan (to Nora). I did have suspicions of him—and you saw Father O'Connor's delicate hint? But I don't know where we stand now. We'll put him between us and find out. (*Taking Hugh by one arm.*) Take his arm there.

Nora (going before). Oh, you examine him.

Fan. Nora! (*Nora turns at the door.*) If you're afraid, it's suspicious.

Nora. I—afraid!

Fan. Take his arm.

Nora. Come. (*Taking Hugh's other arm, laughing but a little embarrassed.*)

Hugh (looking at them in amused curiosity). What's going to happen now?

Fan. I'm dying to know. Come.

(*They go out, Fan laughing gaily, Nora laughing but embarrassed. Hugh submits to their leading puzzled and smiling.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

FIRST PLACE. *The Presbytery. Father O'Hanlon's Room.*

SCENE I

HUGH AND FATHER O'HANLON.

(Father O'Hanlon, alone, sitting; the door to right opens; a servant shows Hugh in and retires.)

Father O'Hanlon (without rising, curt). Well—you want to see me?

Hugh (constrained at the discourteous reception). Yes.

Father O'Hanlon. What about?

Hugh. Your pronouncement from the altar yesterday.

Father O'Hanlon. What have you to say?

Hugh. I'm one of those you spoke of.

Father O'Hanlon (the curt manner pronounced). You may sit down. *(Hugh does not sit.)* Do you come with an explanation?

Hugh. No, Father O'Hanlon, I come for an explanation.

Father O'Hanlon (rising sharply). What do you mean, sir?

Hugh. You addressed your remarks in particular to each person concerned.

Father O'Hanlon (angrily). Yes!

Hugh. It touches me and I am here.

Father O'Hanlon (arrested, he hesitates, but speaks sharply). Will you please sit down?

Hugh (at the altered manner he sits). Thank you.

Father O'Hanlon (trying to dominate). Don't be so guarded. You don't inspire confidence.

Hugh. I hope to inspire confidence.

Father O'Hanlon. Speak out.

Hugh. I wish to speak out.

Father O'Hanlon. Come to the point. I don't want a speech.

Hugh. I object to having politics I dislike forced on me in the church I attend.

Father O'Hanlon. Do you challenge me for denouncing revolutionists and atheists?

Hugh. Not one of those covered by your charge is an atheist.

Father O'Hanlon. Ah, you don't deny they are revolutionists.

Hugh. Given the present conditions, I should be ashamed to deny they are revolutionists.

Father O'Hanlon. You dare speak this to my face!

Hugh. I came for another purpose. When in your responsible position as administrator of this parish, you describe me from the altar as an atheist, it's time to call it in question.

Father O'Hanlon. That touches you, does it? I know what I speak about.

Hugh. You should know I'm a Catholic.

Father O'Hanlon. I've my doubts as to the Catholicity of some of you.

Hugh (a pause). You should have no doubt when you speak of it from the altar.

Father O'Hanlon (flaming and facing him). Sir!

Hugh (rising). You realize the gravity of it.

Father O'Hanlon (stung to greater anger by the advantage of Hugh's quiet manner). You are insolent. There is the door. This interview is closed.

Hugh (going under obvious self-control. He speaks quietly at the door, but with a coldness that has the trace of a sting). I thought 'twas a priest's duty to draw

men to the Church, above all keep them in it—not to push them out.

Father O'Hanlon (paling, touched by sudden fear). Stay.

Hugh. I think it would be well if we both understood each other clearly.

Father O'Hanlon (feeling he has lost the advantage, tries to bluster a little). I mean to put an end to the campaign of violence and irreligion in my parish at least.

Hugh. Any fight against irreligion will have my support.

Father O'Hanlon. Don't trifle with me.

Hugh. I'm not trifling.

Father O'Hanlon. You want to understand me—so you shall: and you wish me to understand you—very well. Speak out quickly and frankly. I desire it. I want to know you. 'Twill help me. Your point——

Hugh (frank and friendly when turning back, his patience is now strained by Father O'Hanlon's immoderate manner). If you denounce as irreligion politics you dislike, 'twill lead to trouble.

Father O'Hanlon. Do you prescribe for me what I may denounce? It's I shall rule in these matters which you shall remember.

Hugh (losing his temper). Remember you're dealing with men, not children. I know my right and your duty.

Father O'Hanlon. My duty, you know my duty.

Hugh. Where it touches my right.

Father O'Hanlon. I've given you too much encouragement.

Hugh (getting exasperated). You don't encourage me to be patient.

Father O'Hanlon. This must end. You have not come to express regret, but actually to justify your conduct. I mean to be strict. I will denounce you

and your accomplices if you persist in your violent ways. Now you understand——

Hugh. Yes, Father O'Hanlon, and——

Father O'Hanlon. I have spoken.

Hugh. I, too, must speak.

Father O'Hanlon. Not another word.

Hugh. You shall not have the last word.

Father O'Hanlon (going to the bell). This interview is at an end.

Hugh (now in great anger, coming between Father O'Hanlon and the bell). But you shall hear this. While real evils are unchecked, you start a scare of atheism; and sincere people follow you in ignorance and honest men are disgusted. (*Father O'Hanlon breaks by him and pulls the bell violently.*) To fight evil is no light labour: to start a scare is easy; but it won't do as a substitute for duty any longer. We'll have it exposed. (*He goes in anger.*)

SCENE II

FATHER O'HANLON AND SERVANT.

(*Father O'Hanlon is breathless in anger and amazement after Hugh's exit. He goes to the door, returns to the table, pauses, strikes it with his hand, paces up and down, muttering and frowning, goes to the bell and rings sharply again, paces as before; the servant appears.*)

Father O'Hanlon. Is Father O'Connor in his room?

Servant. Yes, Father.

Father O'Hanlon. Tell him I wish to speak to him.

Servant. Yes, Father.

(*She goes. Father O'Hanlon paces again. Father O'Connor comes in, unsuspecting.*)

SCENE III

FATHER O'HANLON AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Father O'Connor. You sent for me ?*Father O'Hanlon (curt).* Yes. You remember the man O'Neill we talked of recently ?*Father O'Connor (becoming constrained).* Yes.*Father O'Hanlon.* I warned you of him. I've had disagreeable experience of the need for that warning.*Father O'Connor.* There must be a mistake.*Father O'Hanlon.* He insulted me to my face ; flouted my opinions ; challenged my conduct in my duty : he questioned my voice from the altar. Do you realize what that means ?*Father O'Connor (troubled and ill at ease, feeling vaguely for words).* He is warm in his opinions.—Perhaps—you exaggerate.*Father O'Hanlon (amazed).* I—exaggerate !*Father O'Connor.* Perhaps—misunderstand.*Father O'Hanlon (stern).* I did not bring you here to extenuate his conduct, but to listen to my caution. Any meeting he or his friends are connected with—avoid. You understand me ?*Father O'Connor.* Yes.*Father O'Hanlon.* I wish you to realize this man is dangerous.*Father O'Connor (his constraint passing in indignation).* You misunderstand him. He's a friend of mine whom I know intimately and I know your judgment is at fault.*Father O'Hanlon (hard).* He's a plausible speaker who puts on a show of zeal for religion. Such men are most dangerous.*Father O'Connor (with a little heat).* You wrong him. He's passionately sincere and has a restraining influence on men who may be dangerous.

Father O'Hanlon (sarcastic). I'm sorry to see such evidence of the man's dangerous plausibility—to see you so obviously under his influence.

Father O'Connor (with great heat). You're most unjust.

Father O'Hanlon (his temper rising). I don't wish to lose my temper. I've had enough unpleasantness with him. Don't provoke me.

Father O'Connor. You judge him by an angry five minutes' conversation. I judge him by the intimate confidence of years.

Father O'Hanlon (arrogant). You're blinded by him, but you'll be ruled by me.

Father O'Connor (slight pause, manner forced, quiet, but hard). In my actions, yes.

Father O'Hanlon. I can't control your sympathies but——

Father O'Connor. My judgment is my own. You will remember I, also, am a responsible priest. In my actions I defer to the authority set over me.

Father O'Hanlon. I warn you your mind is being warped.

Father O'Connor. Not in this case.

Father O'Hanlon. I don't believe in this man's faith.

Father O'Connor. Take care—you may go too far.

Father O'Hanlon. What!—will you, too, teach me my duty?

Father O'Connor. Even if he is wavering on the line of faith—even gone over, what should I do—use patience and sympathy to win him back; or in a fit of spleen push him over and keep him there?

Father O'Hanlon (in great anger). His very insinuation! The man is pulling you like a puppet.

Father O'Connor (hotly). Is a thing false simply because he says it?

Father O'Hanlon. I warn you again.

Father O'Connor. Say something definite against him.

Father O'Hanlon. The man is dangerous, because not an open enemy. A violent infidel I can deal with; with the help of the people I can put him down. But these innovators who say they are of the Fold and attack us from within, they are dangerous because within.

Father O'Connor. You keep the one word dangerous. You must say some one definite thing.

Father O'Hanlon. It's enough he's dangerous.

Father O'Connor. It's false.

Father O'Hanlon. You dare give me the lie.

Father O'Connor. I know it's false.

Father O'Hanlon. These men are one and all treacherous.

Father O'Connor (*coming nearer with angry challenge*). You say he is treacherous?

Father O'Hanlon. They are nothing but treacherous.

Father O'Connor. You say he is treacherous.

Father O'Hanlon. Treachery is the one note of such men.

Father O'Connor. You say *he* is treacherous.

Father O'Hanlon. How dare you challenge me? I say he is treacherous.

Father O'Connor (*furious*). It's a lie.

Father O'Hanlon. You dare——

Father O'Connor (*bursting in*). It's a lie, a black, damnable lie——

Father O'Hanlon. You——

Father O'Connor. And you know it.

(*He flings himself out violently.*)

SCENE IV

FATHER O'HANLON AND SERVANT.

(Father O'Hanlon is standing by the table as if transfixed. The servant re-appears, waiting. He does not see her at first; after a pause he turns, notices and questions her abruptly.)

Father O'Hanlon. Well?

The Servant. Mr. Mangan has come, Father.

Father O'Hanlon. Show him in.

(The Servant goes, returns after a moment, shows in Mangan and retires.)

SCENE V

FATHER O'HANLON AND MANGAN.

Father O'Hanlon. Good-day, John. You got my message? *(They shake hands.)*

Mangan. Yes—anything serious? *(Both sit.)*

Father O'Hanlon. I had not thought it so serious; but things have moved quickly.—It's now too late.

Mangan. Too late!

Father O'Hanlon. For my original purpose, yes. But you may be of service yet.

Mangan. I hope so.

Father O'Hanlon. You know of my intention to put a stop, in this parish at least, to the new propaganda of violence, when everyone is looking for peace. I had my suspicions of this Hugh O'Neill and warned Father O'Connor against him; but Father O'Connor was very hot in his defence, which annoyed and even alarmed me. Knowing you to be a friend of both, and wishing to be quite just, I sent for you to

secure your influence in, if possible, bringing them to moderation.

Mangan. You say it's too late.

Father O'Hanlon. I've had a rather violent interview with each of them.

Mangan (in surprise). With each of them?

Father O'Hanlon. Yes. Father O'Connor's actions I can control. His sympathies, I suspected, were not with me. But I was quite unprepared for his violently insulting language.

Mangan. He lost his temper, I'm sure. Don't make too much of it.

Father O'Hanlon. I mean to speak to the Bishop and have him removed, as much for his own sake as anything else.

Mangan. Does his conduct merit so severe a penalty?

Father O'Hanlon. His conduct was quite unpardonable.

Mangan. Then I won't plead against the change. He has grit. Hardship will do him good; 'twill bring him to a finer sense of duty.

Father O'Hanlon (sharply). You speak as if he were wrongfully penalized.

Mangan. No; but 'twill do him good to feel the bit. Frankly, James, I'm not favourably impressed with the well-groomed young men now being turned out of our seminaries. They know little of hardship and spend too much of their time in drawing-rooms.

Father O'Hanlon (looking at Mangan with some significance). I agree with you.

Mangan. I hope you will be careful in the other case.

Father O'Hanlon (bridling up). Let me say your confidence in this O'Neill is sadly misplaced. I've found him to be a most dangerous man.

Mangan. You exaggerate——

Father O'Hanlon (rising angrily). Has the man hypnotized you all? These are Father O'Connor's very words.

Mangan. I know him to be sincere and scrupulous to a fault.

Father O'Hanlon. I brought you here to see if you could restrain him and you begin with a defence——

Mangan. Not of his views but his character.

Father O'Hanlon. His character I distrust, but you can't ignore his views.

Mangan. His conclusions are extreme, but of his loyalty there is never a doubt.

Father O'Hanlon (with emphasis). You're mistaken. He's a most insidious man.

Mangan (in turn rising angrily). You're scandalously unjust.

Father O'Hanlon (confronting him). I'm amazed at your attitude. I little expected this. The interview must close.

Mangan (quieter and conciliatory). Let us be reasonable, James. After a life-time of friendship, a few minutes conversation should not make us violent. I'm concerned about Hugh O'Neill. I've tried to influence him in matters of importance without effect, though, I must say, I found him amenable in little things, for advice in which he was grateful. His gentleness in some ways surprised me and gave me hope. But, frankly, I'm troubled about bigger things. I cannot conceal my high opinion of him; if you, however, distrust this, we still agree in wishing to restrain him. It would relieve me, if we could talk it over quietly.

Father O'Hanlon (mollified). How can I talk it over, if you resent my freely speaking my mind?

Mangan. I got warm for a moment. Since we differ in our views as to his character, let us say frankly what we think, and restrain our feelings. I'm anxious to do something—if it's still possible.

Father O'Hanlon. I'm very disappointed at your attitude.

Mangan (a touch of regret). You're aware at least there's no trace of extreme views in me—though, for that matter, neither of us as boys lacked fire.

Father O'Hanlon. We were boys: we got common-sense when we grew up.

Mangan. Common-sense has not made me happy.

Father O'Hanlon. Nonsense.

Mangan. Well, let me repeat, if I defend O'Neill, 'tis the man, not his views.

Father O'Hanlon (forcibly). And let me repeat 'tis the man I distrust. He does not, like other men, confine himself to plain obvious things. There are hidden meanings in his words—he lays careful traps with plausible speech to trip you——

Mangan. He has an eager, searching brain, never at rest——

Father O'Hanlon. Do you not realize these young men of ungovernable way of thinking and no experience can work incalculable mischief?

Mangan. It can't be said of Hugh O'Neill that he has no experience.

Father O'Hanlon. What does he know beside us, who are more than double his years?

Mangan. I can only speak for myself.

Father O'Hanlon. Anything you can say I will hear patiently.

Mangan. I know he's much better informed than myself in matters political. The caution to avoid any extreme I took so carefully, I never could learn the heart of the struggle; but he plunged into the fight at once, and has battled for years with all sorts of combinations. Now he's still young, but he knows every modification and ramification of party. In this I'm a child in comparison. (*Father O'Hanlon motions dissent.*) I used to patronize and chaff him as

a child. I remember the sense of shock when I first noticed him growing beyond me.

Father O'Hanlon (abruptly). Absurd.

Mangan (a tone of regret). That's always our mistake. We think, because we're grown men when they're born the relations never change. We never see they gradually creep up to us; we never see something graver still—(*pause.*)

Father O'Hanlon. Well?

Mangan. They sometimes pass us and we try to stop them.

Father O'Hanlon. Go on.

Mangan. It's graver when a priest, in the name of Religion, tries to deny them a right.

Father O'Hanlon. Go on.

Mangan. Need I say any more?

Father O'Hanlon (with a certain grim irony). Then you've come to think we priests are dictators, who suppress rights, preach narrow politics under the guise of Religion, who are to be exposed generally, defeated, put down, reviled, banished——

Mangan. You exaggerate a complaint so much that the exaggeration hides the truth.

Father O'Hanlon. You are obsessed by the man, quite obsessed.

Mangan. I——

Father O'Hanlon. I heard you out. Hear me without interruption. O'Neill has deceived you cleverly. (*Mangan makes to interrupt, but Father O'Hanlon waves dissent.*) Let me speak. You see you are hasty. You will understand my shortcomings and difficulties when I admit I am, perhaps, more hasty. It's quite popular now to criticize priests in authority. Do I pretend they're without a flaw? They're men with the faults and weaknesses of men. If we're dogmatic in matters, not exactly of doctrine, where there is room for discussion, did you find O'Neill less dogmatic in his views? If we try to

impose our views on those who listen to us, does he not try to impose his views on you and others—and with obvious success? (*Again Mangan makes to interrupt, but Father O'Hanlon restrains him and continues.*) Am I to be governed in what I say from the altar by my own judgment and the guidance of those who taught me or by this young man of less than half my years? I don't want to seem bitter. I will accept your estimate of O'Neill, that he is sincere, high-minded, self-controlled, loyal—I accept it for the moment only. How many of those he may influence can you thus speak for? There is the danger. One man, sincere enough, preaches a view which hundreds take to the wildest extremes. Allowing this young man to be as old and experienced as myself, still he's a free-lance. He has no parish of thousands under his control and no direct responsibility. I must think for people who can't think for themselves and must protect them from evils they don't understand. (*Mangan's look of dissent is noticed to soften and disappear. Father O'Hanlon sees this and softens also.*) Priests make mistakes, and in their own councils are criticized severely—even harshly. Nothing escapes. But we refuse to enter the lists with these young men. We use our authority to put them down. Can you say anything against it?

Mangan (quietly). Nothing.

Father O'Hanlon (with assurance). Of course not. (*More gently.*) You see, I'm ready to speak fully in confidence to you as an old friend and equal in years; but it would be derogatory to a priest's dignity to discuss these grave matters with every conceited young man.

Mangan. Suppose the young men decide to go on without asking to discuss the matter—what then?

Father O'Hanlon (a little taken back). We shall deal with them. Have my reasons not satisfied you?

Mangan. I don't challenge your arguments.

Father O'Hanlon. But you're not satisfied, I see.

Mangan. Perhaps, 'tis my feeling only. I've not lost touch with old years as completely as you.

Father O'Hanlon. Mere sentiment.

Mangan. No—something more. (*His manner arrests Father O'Hanlon.*) When I carefully took the moderate course, I was often secretly ashamed of the actions it involved. When O'Neill, in turn, had the same choice offered him, and took the brave course, my feeling for him was one of admiration. And then my own son started into my mind's eye: if he gets a fair chance, he should do well—still I'm anxious. But whether O'Neill gets a fair chance or not I feel he will always do well; and it seems to justify him. I find myself hoping my boy will prove as brave a man.

Father O'Hanlon (a little testily). This is no argument.

Mangan. Perhaps, only instinct. You know I accepted your reasons, as you did, years ago.

Father O'Hanlon. We must rely on our practical sense.

Mangan. The instinct beneath defeats what you call our practical sense.

Father O'Hanlon (abruptly). That suggests something I've heard but wouldn't believe—your girl Nora's name mentioned in connection with Hugh O'Neill.

Mangan. There's nothing in it.

Father O'Hanlon. Of course not. But in view of your attitude about O'Neill I was afraid——

Mangan. In any case Nora must decide for herself when it comes to that step.

Father O'Hanlon. I know she's an independent sort of girl, but you surely have influence——

Mangan. Yes, but I've made one resolution—not to influence her into marrying a weak man. She

has spirit, and I can imagine her being attracted by one of courage and decision—Hugh even occurred to me—but they are too free and combative with each other—

Father O'Hanlon. You may be a bad judge —

Mangan. I would not oppose it. Let me be sure of the man's character—for the rest, if he has grit, I am glad. When a man like me takes a weak line in life and finds, to his surprise, his children, when their turn comes, show more spirit, he gets unexpectedly an opportunity of redeeming his name. If that opportunity comes to me, I shall be grateful.

Father O'Hanlon. John, I've warned you, mind. But if you want to help O'Neill, speak to him again. Tell him if he's reasonable and amenable to authority I'll be reasonable. If not—point out the consequences.

Mangan. I've done so.

Father O'Hanlon. I'll bring Father O'Connor to his senses.

Mangan. He will obey orders.

Father O'Hanlon. And you're troubled for the other!

Mangan. He is, as you say, a free-lance; yet one, I think, who will obey his conscience. It will lead him into trouble, I am afraid; and it troubles me that I've failed to ward it off.

Father O'Hanlon. Oh! he will give up if he has sense. Every sensible person does.

Mangan (moving). Not always.

Father O'Hanlon. You're going?

Mangan. Yes.

Father O'Hanlon. Reason with him again.

Mangan. It's useless. Perhaps, I might say a last word to you. We can influence these young men if we sympathize with them, and try to keep them straight on the lines they are going: that I've learned. But if we go violently against them,

they will prevail in the end. They have youth on their side; what they say now will be said in Ireland when we're in the grave.

Father O'Hanlon. Tut, tut, how apt you are to be depressed!

Mangan. It's the decree of life. We pass off and they take the stage.

Father O'Hanlon. Not just yet.

Mangan. I think it has reached that point.

(Holding out his hand.)

Father O'Hanlon (taking his hand). Good-bye, John.

Mangan. Good-bye, James.

(They shake hands in silence, quietly and cordially. Mangan goes out.)

SCENE VI

FATHER O'HANLON AND SERVANT.

(Father O'Hanlon turns from the door slowly, stands a moment at the table in thought, goes to the bell, rings. The servant comes.)

Father O'Hanlon. Is Father O'Connor in his room?

Servant. I think he has gone out, Father.

Father O'Hanlon. Will you see?

Servant. He told me to make up some things. He thought it possible he might have to leave town.

Father O'Hanlon. Yes—there was some talk of it. Do nothing more till he gives you further instructions. *(Knock.)* See who's there. *(The servant opens and Father O'Connor enters.)* You may go. *(To the servant. She goes.)*

SCENE VII

FATHER O'HANLON AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Father O'Hanlon. Well?

(He had been meditating another interview with Father O'Connor, yet when the latter enters, he puts on the curt manner. Father O'Connor has entered in constraint, which is heightened by this unsympathetic reception.)

Father O'Connor. There's something for which I should apologize.

Father O'Hanlon. I'm relieved you think so.

(Secretly, he is much relieved, but his manner belies it.)

Father O'Connor. In defending O'Neill my attitude was ill-judged.

Father O'Hanlon. Well?

Father O'Connor (still more constrained, halting in speech). I forgot myself—I used a certain expression—it was unbecoming a priest.—In denying a charge of yours, I said you knew it was false—it was an insult—when I cooled, I should return to apologize.

Father O'Hanlon. You withdraw your defence of O'Neill?

Father O'Connor. No.

Father O'Hanlon. No!

Father O'Connor. My manner was insulting. For that I am sorry and apologize.

Father O'Hanlon (losing his temper). Your manner! Do you think I keep in mind the insults of every ill-tempered young man.

Father O'Connor (pale). You did well to despise the insult. It was no less my duty to apologize.

Father O'Hanlon. Do you persist in your attitude regarding this man?

Father O'Connor. I came to apologize for my fault, not for my friend.

Father O'Hanlon. You apologize for a trifle and stick stubbornly to what is vitally wrong.

Father O'Connor. I'm at liberty to believe in my friend.

Father O'Hanlon. You're trifling with me.

(Father O'Hanlon becomes arrogant, and Father O'Connor's constraint passes.)

Father O'Connor. I wish to observe due deference to those to whom I owe it, while being true to my conscience and my friend.

Father O'Hanlon. Sir, you have not improved matters by returning. I would have overlooked the insult. I will not overlook this obstinacy. Do you persist?

Father O'Connor. It is my right.

Father O'Hanlon. Do you persist?

Father O'Connor. It is my duty.

Father O'Hanlon (peremptory and emphatic). Do you persist?

Father O'Connor (with quiet decision). I persist.

Father O'Hanlon. You may go.

(He steps angrily to the door and waves him out.)

Father O'Connor bows in silence and goes quietly.)

Father O'Hanlon (returning angrily to the table, pause). It must be done.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SECOND PLACE. *A Hall before the Carnival.*

SCENE I

HUGH AND NORA.

(Hugh and Nora come in from the left. He is a little depressed but trying to force it off—unsuccessfully; curious at her. She is gay, bright, and bantering, in a mood airy and provocative.)

Nora. I'm sorry I came alone to give you the message. I know I'm dull, but you needn't let it be so evident you're bored.

Hugh. You're in a merry mood.

Nora. I mean it. Why are you in the mopes? You were gay enough yesterday.

Hugh. 'Twas yesterday and we were in a crowd.

Nora. It's not complimentary to go into the blues for me.

Hugh. I was wondering—*(he pauses.)*

Nora (a little amused irritation). Why do you pause? You've a most irritating manner.

Hugh. Perhaps, it's a strange incomprehensible sort of compliment.

Nora. Oh, do stop that. I want no conundrums. If I were big enough I'd take you by the shoulders and shake you well.

Hugh. Why?

Nora (studying him a little). Tell me, aren't you—just a little affected?

Hugh (roused, nettled a little). Now you are nasty.

Nora (she trips away laughing, then turns on him). There's a change! Well, a bit of a temper is better than the blues. (*There's a faint sign of the temper, which she does not like.*) You are touchy. (*Not a word from him.*)—As if I meant it.

Hugh. You said it as if you meant it.

Nora. Would I have said it, if I did?

Hugh (doubtfully). Thanks.

Nora (laughing outright). Oh, you're impossibly serious. I wish some nice fellow I knew would come along. I'd drop you.

Hugh. I'm sorry you came on me in such a luckless humour. Maybe I'll drop on you some time when you're less merry and then we'll be quits.

Nora. What's the matter? Have you a toothache or are you in love?

Hugh. What makes you so merry to-day?

Nora. You're getting on my nerves.

Hugh. I must be frank. I had just come from an interview with Father O'Hanlon when you found me. It was not very pleasant.

Nora (with a quick searching look). Indeed.

Hugh. He's a bit autocratic, you know.

Nora. Yes. I would not like to fall foul of him.

Hugh. Well—I did.

Nora. Take care.

Hugh. Still, that's not really the trouble. He makes a clash inevitable. When a thing's inevitable it's a relief to have it come.—It's all right.

Nora. You say "all right" so dolefully, one suspects something's wrong. What is it?

Hugh. I wish you could tell me.

Nora. You're a proper puzzle.

Hugh. That does not help.

Nora (moving to pass in right). Oh, come into the fun and get lively. Why do you delay? You're not expecting anyone?

Hugh. No.

Nora. Come, then. You remember the Mrs. Connolly you met yesterday for the first time? She had heard you were *so* serious, and was surprised to find you almost frivolous.

Hugh. Indeed.

Nora. She even rebuked Molly Keane.

Hugh. Yes?

Nora. If she could see you now she'd recover her original serious view.

Hugh. Does she understand serious people?

Nora. Oh, come along. (*He does not move.*) You're the cause of the delay, and I'll be blamed.

Hugh. I've not changed my mind.

Nora. What do you mean?

Hugh. I'm not going in.

Nora. Not really going into the Carnival?

Hugh. No.

Nora. You don't mean it. They were joking in saying you were in earnest. I said I was sure you'd come.

Hugh. Well, I've come so far.

Nora. Why, if you're not coming in?

Hugh. On the gambler's chance that you might sicken of the business at the last moment.

Nora (*this unexpected intimate touch gives her a little flutter which she covers well*). Don't be silly—come on.

Hugh. Why, after all, need you go in?

Nora. Why shouldn't I? You're absurd. What matter who got this Carnival up or what it's for? It's no affair of yours. The music is good.—Come.

Hugh. This Empire Carnival is ostensibly to celebrate Ireland's attaining a little new authority: it's really to celebrate the national and final surrender of her chief claim. Those who stay outside will sustain that claim. Don't be impatient. I'm not going to give you a dissertation on Ireland and the Empire.

Nora. Oh—but I'd like some passable reason.

Hugh. 'Twould bore you now. But if you should desire later to consider the question, I'll write it down and you can read it at your leisure.

Nora. We merely go in to hear the music and amuse ourselves.

Hugh. For others going in there is tantamount to the soldier's giving up his arms.

Nora. But this is really narrow——

Hugh (*his manner somewhat reserved changes suddenly to appeal quick, clear, and warm*). Listen. We can hear good music elsewhere. In half an hour we can be at the sea. Come, and leave this wretched show behind.

Nora (*the swift change clearly flutters her—she's a little confused*). But they are expecting us. What will they say?

Hugh. I don't think they're expecting me. They'll forgive you for a freak. Come—the sea or the Carnival—what a choice! The tide will be full this evening; and the music will be glorious on the water. Come.

Nora (*she loses herself at this sudden undisguised warmth—secretly eager to go, she meets him with half-dissent*). But I promised to return.

Hugh. They won't mind. And that place is false and dull (*pointing in*)—when you go near it, 'twill strike you cold. But our spirits will rise near the sea.

Nora. But we can all go to the sea later.

Hugh (*another word and she would have yielded. He inexplicably and unexpectedly presses no more, relapsing to his former quiet manner*). I'm not going in there.

Nora (*a sudden sinking, feeling she has made a mistake*). Don't be disagreeable. They'll blame me, when I go in alone.

Hugh. I'm sorry you waited, since it involves your going in alone.

Nora. Oh, don't mind me. But I'm disappointed in you.

Hugh. Well, when you go in, you may see it in another light.

Nora (*his definite acceptance that they must part strikes a chill; she moves nearer to passage in right; can see crowds at a distance; a little excited*). Oh, see—what crowds! Why, all Dublin's going in. Do have sense and come.

Hugh. No.

Nora (*his manner is constrained but his simple negative to her seems curt and she in turn is constrained*). Oh, I wouldn't ask you but for being deputed.

Hugh. I'm sorry you didn't ask something where there was no bar.

Nora. Thanks. Remember, I came with a message not for a favour. I feel a bit foolish now.

Hugh. I'm sorry you've had the trouble.

Nora (*now an attempt to take it lightly*). Oh, it's no trouble. I wouldn't have come, if it didn't please me.

Hugh. Thanks for so much.

Nora. We can't stand here. Surely, you're not going to part at the door?

Hugh. I would prefer not.

Nora. Come, then. Our friends are waiting. What will they say if I fail to bring you?

Hugh. They will understand.

Nora (*with a sudden touch of intimacy and appeal which moves him*). Come: I ask it as a favour, then.

Hugh (*his trouble apparent*). I'm sorry I must refuse.

Nora (*quietly with a half-smile, a little pale*). I can't understand—to part from your friends—here—over this.

Hugh. I've as much right to expect them go with me as they have to expect me go with them.

Nora (*forcing a little laugh*). Don't get angry.

Hugh. No.—I think I'm rather sobered.

Nora. Oh, it's mere obstinacy. (*She does not really mean this and is immediately sorry. She is feeling aimlessly for words.*) They'll say I never pressed you; but for that I would not have asked, let alone urged you; least of all pleaded it as a favour. (*Turning to passage in right.*) Oh, there they are! (*Waving.*) See! (*turning to him*) at the other door, just going in. (*Now as if speaking to the others at a distance.*) Coming! (*Turning to him.*) I'm certain. There is Molly Keane waving—look. (*He is silent.*) Oh, do you hear the music beginning? (*The music is heard faintly.*) Listen—the Bridal March from Lohengrin. Wouldn't it be appropriate if Fan and Con were here?—Oh, there they are again—can't understand our delay—waving—see. (*He is still silent. She moves to him lightly.*) Say something.

Hugh (*his manner is subdued*). I have said it.

(*He has been silent, watching her intently. They have both tried to make light of the situation, unsuccessfully. His effort to keep down the grave manner by covering it with a smile has a curious effect, of which he is unconscious: it leaves on his face an unaccountable but arresting expression. The expression seems to fascinate her. It certainly strikes and excites her a little. She moves backward and forward, turning from him to their friends whom she sees in the distance, now speaking to him, now waving to them. He maintains his silence all through. She is secretly eager to stay, while urging him to go, and drags out the words. Still, he is silent. When at last she makes her definite appeal to him to "say something," she comes to him, laying her hand on his arm in a little playful nervous manner. His reply is quiet but at her touch his eyes light and bring the colour to her face. Her tone unconsciously becomes gentler.*)

Nora. No use to resist.

Hugh. Still, I resist.

Nora. It's fate. Come.

Hugh. We may conquer fate.

Nora (*drawing back*). Oh, you're too terrible. You frighten me. (*Going to the exit*.) I must go. You won't come?—It won't be the same inside—come—it's fate—come.

(*She is at the exit, right, waving him in. He is in the centre, not speaking, making no sign, the strange expression, half-grave, half-smiling, on his face. She keeps the playful mood to the end, but it is obviously forced. Her manner is a little nervous, embarrassed, doubtful. She pauses, appeals, hesitates, goes. He is alone.*)

SCENE II

HUGH ALONE.

Hugh (*when Nora has gone he stands motionless awhile, then sinks on a seat near the wall, breathing deeply as under a load. His expression changes completely; his face is clouded; a heaviness of spirit comes over him. This parting has struck him straight to the heart, and he is stunned by the discovery, entirely strange. What can it mean that he feels it so, is his thought; but everything is blank. Still the feeling surges up and will not subside; he divines its meaning and will not put it into words. With his head in his hands he rests awhile, then rises slowly, a single involuntary cry escaping him*).

My God! I never realized.

(*And moving like one in pain, he goes slowly out to the left.*)

CURTAIN,

ACT III

THIRD PLACE. *The Nationalist Club-Room.*

(There is a door at the back leading to an inner room. The exit is at the side. There is a table in the centre, and chairs for a meeting.)

The Nationalists are seen to be all young men, the age of the more prominent members running from 28 to 35.)

SCENE I

DOYLE, MACKEY, BENNETT, MAHER, KIELY.

(The men are keen in conversation.)

Kiely (self-assured). The fact is O'Neill wants to be in the lime-light. We should put him in his place.

Doyle (angry). Kiely, you've not said one word, but to question O'Neill's motives.

Maher (smooth). But motives must be considered. The man is simply afraid.

Kiely. Quite so.

Doyle (significant). He challenges you with public funk before the lord mayor.

Bennett. Don't raise that again.

Kiely (defiant). Why not? Have it out.

Doyle. Be sure, we will.

Bennett (to Doyle). You know I'm a sound republican but I don't agree with you in this matter of Kiely's. Tactics are necessary in public,

Doyle. Here we are with our tactics—not a word of our work but of this man's character.

Maher. But you persist in thinking him a fine fellow.

Doyle. My God! are we to make a virtue of thinking him a blackguard?

Maher. You know that's not what I mean. I'm not as clever as others at speaking—I'm a plain, unpretentious man with no genius——

Doyle (impatiently). Maher, if you start depreciating yourself, you'll make me ill.

Maher (undisturbed, his smooth flattery obviously disagreeable to Doyle). Doyle, we all haven't your ability and must do things in our own way, bad as it is; and you mustn't think, because you're straight, that everyone is. You give O'Neill credit for things because you're above-board——

Doyle (breaking in). I don't want a speech about my virtues. *(He walks apart in disgust. Kiely confronts him with pronounced self-assurance.)*

Kiely. Well, you're wrong about O'Neill. Maher's right. I challenged the man myself. I know he's afraid. *(Doyle says nothing but gives Kiely a contemptuous look. Kiely continues unabashed.)* Will you take O'Neill's view, then?

Doyle (curt). No.

Bennett. Well, then?

Doyle. Let us talk of our own plans.

Mackey (he has been quietly attentive). Making it a personal matter puts an end to serious discussion.

Bennett. Frankly, I don't like the man. But he's only one, and the others will come with us.

Kiely. I know it.

Maher (he has moved to the door, back). There's a crowd inside.

Kiely (following Maher). Let's see what's on.

(They both go in.)

SCENE II

DOYLE, MACKEY, BENNETT.

*(Bennett goes to the door, back, but does not go in—
pauses, silent.)*

Mackey (to Doyle). The meeting will be here?

Doyle. Yes.

Bennett (speaking from the door). The crowd is quite large.

Doyle. They'll come out soon.

Bennett (still at the door). O'Neill is there and talking in his usual dogmatic way. They're all around him and attentive. *(Coming forward.)* Are you sure he won't turn the tables?

Doyle (uncivil). That remains to be seen.

Bennett. You take it too coolly.

Doyle. You've a set on the man, which I don't like.

Mackey. Can't we argue our point as well as he? What do you fear?

Bennett. He's a plausible and free talker, who knows his crowd and is never at a loss for a word. Leave the crowd in his hands and he'll twist them in five minutes.

Mackey. You don't pay much compliment to our ability.

Bennett. It's his underhand ways I don't like. Look at him in there now trying to get at the crowd.

Mackey. What way is more open and above-board than speaking in a crowd? He'd have more reason to complain of a few of us speaking of him here apart. Your hinting at his dishonesty will lead to a rupture. If a man is not taken in good faith, he may as well go.

Bennett. To be frank, I wish he would go. I don't trust him. I mean to see how the talk drifts.

(He goes into inner room.)

SCENE III

DOYLE AND MACKEY.

Mackey. I don't like their attitude to O'Neill.

Doyle. They'll make it difficult to deal with him.

Mackey. Do you think he may carry his point?

Doyle. No; the fellows will listen, but that's all.

Mackey. Bennett is sure to say something that will put O'Neill up.

Doyle. Bennett is jealous.

Mackey. Yes. Our meetings are not fortunate. The best of the fellows rarely talk; those of small account say too much: and what a level the report drops to as a result.

Doyle. 'Tis time the meeting should begin.

Mackey (going to the door, back). They're coming out.

(The crowd streams out from the inner room, Hugh O'Neill and Bennett leading. They fall into two groups.)

SCENE IV

THE WHOLE GROUP OF NATIONALISTS.

Bennett (to Hugh, authoritatively). We must make more use of our brains.

Hugh. Let us be straight and we'll win through.

(Doyle, Mackey and others go to the table. Hugh, Rohan, Keane, and Lawlor are in front. Bennett, Maher, Kiely on one side talk together.)

Keane. I'm afraid 'twill go against us.

Hugh. We'll see it out.

Rohan. Well, it's a question of method. The majority must decide.

Hugh. It's something more, Rohan,

Lawlor (quickly). Couldn't we adjourn? The original date was changed and that's an excuse. We could have others later—there's Sheehan.

Hugh. We agreed to the change of date: this meeting is only informal,

Keane (hesitating). If the main principle is kept, I don't see—

Hugh. Keane, there's danger of our talking about principle generally, but dodging it in the particular.

Rohan. There's also danger, O'Neill, of our confusing principle with sentiment.

Hugh. True, Rohan, but we must not take fright if foolish people call principle sentiment.

Lawlor (more hurried). I'd be in favour of putting off the meeting somehow—

Hugh (a touch of irritation). Lawlor, if we rely on dodging, a time will come when we can't dodge, then we're sure to go down.

Rohan. Come, they're getting ready.

Doyle (aloud, coming forward). Time to begin.

(General movement. Bennet, Maher, and Kiely come from background where they have been whispering—Bennett quick to speak first.)

Bennett. I propose Mr. Doyle take the chair.

Kiely. I second that.

Hugh. This, remember, is an informal conference.

Bennett. We can make it formal.

Maher. I second that.

Doyle. It's understood we're to have an informal talk first to see where we stand. Men of our way of thinking should assert Ireland's right not to a subordinate position but to independence. Numbers of groups are urging the matter separately and debating it in the Press, but this leads nowhere. We want unity and an organization to be effective; but an organization, secret or open—which? That's the crux. We've made the mistake of assuming the methods to be mutually exclusive. I believe in a combination of both. Let's talk it out.

Maher. Let me apologize for intruding first, knowing there are more able men present, but I should say how I hate the British Empire and how I long to see it crushed—and we should have a hand

in its downfall. My poor words are too feeble to say how I feel—but the sweetest music a man can hear is the hiss of a bullet on its way to a tyrant's heart—though it's not fashionable to talk that way now—

Hugh (abruptly). I should hope not.

Maher (nettled). I'm no moralist and don't pretend to be any better than I should be. My delight is the old hate—and the hissing bullet and the joy of shedding tyrant's blood—though it may not please some of our new patriots—

Hugh. You talk of bloodshed as if we were out for a picnic.

Maher (upset and nasty). I don't believe in people who want to be in the lime-light. I'm for deeds, and I'm for secret societies whatever any man or authority says. What was good enough for the Fenians is good enough for me.

Hugh (warm). That's no argument—but perhaps a species of moral terrorism.

Kiely (loudly). I won't listen to this talk.

Hugh. We came here to listen to everyone.

Kiely. I won't hear the Fenians slandered.

Maher. Hear, hear.

Hugh (in suppressed exasperation). My God, are we to argue with this!

Doyle (angrily to Kiely). You've got to hear everyone and talk to the point.

Kiely. This is no place for timid people.

Hugh (turning on Kiely). You listen to this: we must have an end to evasion. It cuts at every code of honour and morals. What you are ready to say here, you must say in public. It may be we differ as to ends as well as means—

Bennett (turning on Hugh). I protest against this superior manner—but 'tis characteristic. All this talk of morals is fit more for women than men. I'm no rigorist in morals. I may say I've studied the great ethical systems and am not profoundly

impressed by them. I believe the end justifies the means——

Hugh (breaking in on him). I suspected some of us differed every way.

Bennett (he had put on an important manner, which breaks down in ill-temper). Tyrants don't keep faith with conquered peoples, and peoples are under no obligation to keep faith with tyrants. Let us make and break faith when it suits us. Even the objection to Royal Addresses and other verbal expressions of loyalty is only sentimental when these serve to admit us to the enemy's lines and study to undermine his strength——

Rohan. No—there's the other extreme. I have protested before now against false sentiment; I was kept from my present convictions for a long time by the absurdities constantly spoken in their favour. But you strike at the heart of the truth. We can't go against our own minds.

Bennett (giving a side-glance at Hugh). If a man has the nerves of a woman, he has no business here.

Kiely (also giving a side-glance at Hugh). The work is dangerous. Force no one against his will.

Maher. Hear, hear.

Hugh (speaking vehemently—he strikes the table). We must have a test that will make it impossible for cowards and braggarts to pose as men of spirit.

Bennett (hotly). Are we to tolerate this insolence?

Rohan (to Doyle). If we make the meeting formal, you can bring it to order.

Doyle. We must do so.

Bennett. I agree.

Hugh (to Doyle). But it binds no one.

Maher. It should bind all present.

Kiely. Let whoever's afraid clear out.

Bennett. Take a show of hands.

Hugh. Very well—but it leaves us a free hand.

Bennett. What does this mean? We must have

plain speaking. I'm a revolutionist. Will every man here say as much? We're up against the constitutional majority and must be as one man. We don't want people in the way. I repeat I'm a revolutionist. (*He gives a look of scorn at Hugh.*)

Hugh (facing Bennett). Yes, and you must take the medicine you offer others.

Kiely. Oh, come to the point.

Hugh (ignoring Kiely and still facing Bennett). You must take the risks of the Revolution. You are up against the constitutional majority—and I may be up against yours. I'm a revolutionist.

Kiely (loudly). This is treachery.

Maher. He was never true.

Doyle (sharply first to Kiely). None of this. (*To Hugh.*) Your attitude won't do.

Mackey (quietly to Hugh). Let others finish; then you can speak. We must all restrain ourselves.

Hugh (dominant for a moment, turning to Doyle). There are men here whose only anxiety is to tie the hands of those they dislike. Will you give them scope? Very well. This was to be an informal meeting—let that be—make it formal—resolve what you think fit—make it binding on all present. I only stipulate you make it quite clear to what everyone assents who will remain. I won't be one.

(He makes a sudden and unexpected exit. There is a moment's consternation, as they had a feeling he was yielding: then follows angry talk on both sides, recriminations and commotion. One or two of Hugh's friends make to follow and draw him back—he is gone. Doyle breaks in on the disturbance, bringing the meeting peremptorily to order. There is a hush in contrast to the previous hub-bub. In the silence Doyle speaks quietly.)

Doyle. We'll go on with our business.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

FIRST PLACE. *Hugh O'Neill's Rooms at Mrs. Sullivan's House.*

SCENE I

HUGH AND CON.

(Hugh is discovered alone stretched on a sofa, tired and depressed. A knock and Con enters, cheery. Hugh is roused and sits up but is rather listless.)

Con. What—not asleep, surely?

Hugh. No—I was expecting you.

Con. My first free moment. No escaping visitors for a week or two. But I want all the news—the meeting?

Hugh. A depressing story.

Con. I've heard a good deal.—You've done your best.

Hugh. Well—I made a bad impression.

Con. That's your imagination.

Hugh. No—it may even have amused some of them. I've said such sensible things from time to time about patience, and—I showed so little of it.

Con. We're men, not angels. You got provocation, I know.

Hugh. Some, yes, no doubt.—And there had been side talk in the beginning: I saw how things were drifting.

Con. They were out to find common ground at any cost.

Hugh. A natural desire—and 'twas a thankless

job to keep on emphasizing differences. They wanted to forget things they couldn't settle and it won't do. I saw we should fight for a free hand.

Con. How did it come to a head?

Hugh. I was out of it in five minutes. Bennett, Kiely, and Maher were nasty in their remarks—in fact I've heard since they'd arranged a little plot to tie my hands or get me out. Had I held myself in they should have exposed the game; but I jumped on them quickly in succession. My temper served them. Some of our fellows were annoyed at my aggressiveness.

Con. 'Twas no time for soft speaking.

Hugh. True, but—well, I made a bad impression.

Con. Still, I know there's resentment at the attitude of Bennett and the others.

Hugh. Bennett's is an evil influence.

Con. It's surprising he has such a pull.

Hugh. Surprising—that only? Kiely hinted I was afraid—of all men, Kiely.

Con. And Father O'Hanlon had spoken.

Hugh. If it were not a bit tragic, what a rare comedy we could make of it all!

Con. It's well you can see the joke.—Father O'Hanlon pointed at you in particular.

Hugh. Honestly, it was a relief.

Con. Why you in particular?

Hugh. I had had an interview with him.

Con (expectant). Ah, that explains.

Hugh. Yes—I'll tell you another time. (*He looks fagged.*)

Con. What do the others say?

Hugh. Nothing—do you suppose they're logical?

Con. It should make a difference.

Hugh. It's an offence to be logical; we must be popular. (*His depression is growing.*)

Con. You're thinking of this too much.

Hugh. No—but things fell out unfortunately.

Con. There's something else on your mind.

(The Carnival is in his mind. He wants to lead Hugh up to it. Hugh suspects but carefully avoids the topic.)

Hugh. I felt something should be said to Father O'Hanlon and resolved to say it somehow. I might have done it better—still, I think it shook him a little. Whatever happens, it must do some good. But that day, with the thought in my mind that I should have done better, I picked up at a bookstall a new pamphlet by that blackguard, Blayney—the most scurrilous thing he has written.

Con. Is that fellow loose again?

Hugh. We can get no ear for the truth while such fellows tell their filthy lies.

Con. Isn't it hopeless?

Hugh. The papers will have that pamphlet and we'll be set down as colleagues and friends of Blayney. The editors will know the difference, but some of them with no scruple will raise a cry for their own ends. The irony of it! Fellows like Blayney slandering priests all round raise a defence for the tyrannies of men like Father O'Hanlon.

Con. When did you see Father O'Hanlon?

Hugh. The morning after you left. I picked up the pamphlet the same day. The meeting was that night.

Con. By the way, was it not that day our friends went to the Carnival?

(Con affects a little carelessness. Hugh is at once reticent.)

Hugh. Yes.

Con. How did you manage?

Hugh. I didn't go.

Con. Was there unpleasantness?

Hugh. Well—no.

Con. That seems doubtful.

Hugh. They knew I had an appointment and went off together.

Con. Nothing more?

Hugh. They left me word to follow.

Con. You were quite alone, then?

Hugh. No—they asked Nora Mañgan to return to me with a special message.

Con. Yes?

Hugh. I told her I would not go.

Con. And she went alone?

Hugh. I went with her to the gate.

Con. I would have asked her boldly not to go in.

Hugh. I did.

Con. Yes?

Hugh. She laughed at me.

Con. Was she quite indifferent?

Hugh. Well—not quite.

Con. What did she say?

Hugh. She asked me to go in.

Con. Of herself?

Hugh. Yes.

Con. That was hard.

Hugh. Yes—and she pressed very hard.

Con. What did you say?

Hugh. I nearly yielded.

Con (*taking a breath; this is unexpected*). There would have been talk. Did she see?

Hugh. She never suspected.

Con. I knew you would have a pull.

Hugh. I had not realized. It was so unlike her to ask for anything, it nearly whipped me off my feet.

(*Hugh's reticence inclines to give way under the relief of speaking. Con sees this and tries to draw him to more intimacy.*)

Con. Won't you speak out freely?

Hugh. What more is there to say?

Con. I think there's more on your mind.

Hugh (*hopelessly*). Can I be sure of myself any more?

Con (*emphatic*). Nonsense. To hold out then was the test. You'll never have such a pull again.—You won't mind my being frank?

Hugh. No.

Con. I think you care for Nora Mangan—particularly, I mean.

Hugh (*after a pause, indirectly*). I thought it was friendship—very warm friendship. I had no thought 'twas anything more.

Con. Won't you give me your confidence?

Hugh. I'm afraid you're right. (*His head in his hands for a moment.*)

Con. Afraid?

Hugh (*looking up with a half-smile*). I used to imagine—anything like this as romance. We think we understand—till we come nearer—then—I don't know, *Con*. Don't speak of it.

Con. But you are worrying.

Hugh. It's not a thing you can get away from. Sometimes, here I'm buried in books, or writing, or thinking; and suddenly, some one seems to have entered the room: then, there's an end to my peace and my work. Mere bodily presence would have nothing like the effect.

Con. I heard Nora was not very happy at the Carnival.

Hugh. Let it be.

Con. I don't know what to say.

Hugh. Did you hear of Lawlor?

Con. No.

Hugh. A similar case, but harder. He was with his fiancée—just engaged. She was eager for the Carnival; and they met friends—girls—all going and full of it.

Con. Did Lawlor make a fight?

Hugh. No.

Con. What happened?

Hugh. He went in.

Con. I'm disappointed with Lawlor. He understands things.

Hugh. How many of our fellows will stand alone? They'll call a meeting now and denounce Lawlor—perhaps expel him. Then they'll go on fumbling with their hole and corner rules.

Con. You can't get them to take your point of view.

Hugh. And Father O'Connor is in trouble, too—did you hear?

Con. No.

Hugh. It's not generally known yet—a quarrel with Father O'Hanlon over me. I hear he's to be removed.

Con. He's in town yet. I saw him.

Hugh. Yes. I expect a line before he goes.

Con. It's all very depressing.

Hugh (*his depression deepening very much*). You remember our exhilaration when we began years ago—no thought but a fight with the enemy. How far away that fight is now—and what's to hand?—

Con (*with some concern*). Give it all a rest awhile.

Hugh. Putting away what we want; parting with people we care for; dragging friends into trouble; a source of anxiety and growing dread to those near to us—

Con (*with more concern*). You'll worry yourself sick. Come into the air and we'll go for a good tramp.

Hugh (*not moving*). They think it's sheer perversity; but I hate quarrelling: it's so much pleasanter to go with the tide.

Con (*he comes and puts his hand on Hugh's arm—urgent*). Come.

Hugh (*rising, puts away Con's hand*). They don't make me feel they are right. Such different appeals are made to us—to our sense of comfort or vanity or fear. A few of our own fellows even thought

'twas dislike of Bennett and others animated me. What could you do with that?

Con. We'll talk of it again. Come out.

Hugh. If they were right, they'd appeal to the best in us.

Con. You'll end by making me as bad as yourself.

Hugh. Con, we must look it in the face. I'm pretty hardened to rebuffs now, but when no one cares a jot for our views—well, it shakes me; and when I put them on paper and then think how no one cares, it makes it all seem unreal. I feel I must drop it. I was debating that very point with myself when you came in. All the arguments were for giving up and I had nearly decided on it——

Con (emphatic). And quite right. When you won't get credit for ordinary good faith, it's time to give up.

Hugh. Then there came a whispered reproach, no argument; but it was stronger than the arguments—I wouldn't mind the hard knocks in pushing on, if others only realized 'twas our better instinct that urged us.

Con (breaking in vehemently). Oh, damn them all. Their approval isn't worth having. And you're a damned fool to care about it. Let everything go to blazes—country and movements and the rest. Nothing's worth it.

Hugh (smiling, he lightens perceptibly at Con's outburst). Easy, easy—it's good to reflect on. (*He laughs out a little at Con's still dark manner.*) You can think of life with detachment. When I was young, the thought of death made me shiver: now it's my favourite meditation on sleepless nights. And we're not practical! (*He talks lightly, smiling, quite changed in mood, which relieves Con, though he is held in surprise.*) Better than ignoring it, and at the eleventh hour trying to sneak a pass from God Almighty. (*Coming nearer and putting his hand suddenly on Con's*

arm.) Suppose the Hand falls suddenly: "Come—time up." What then?

Con (breaking away from him). For God's sake come into the air and have a good tramp in the country. (*Knock.*) Thank God for the knock. You've made me quite creepy.

Hugh (going to the door). Who can it be?

(*He opens the door and sees the servant.*)

Servant (handing a letter). A letter from Father O'Connor, and he hopes to see you before he leaves town. (*She goes.*)

Hugh (he returns and sits; the depression comes over him again). Removed—the blow has fallen.

(*The letter unopened in his hand.*)

Con. See what he says.

Hugh (opens the letter, pause—he tries to read, passes his hand over his eyes.) My eyes are paining me. I did not sleep last night. Will you read it out?

(*He hands the letter to Con.*)

Con (takes and reads the letter).

My dear Hugh,

I have been removed to a distant and poor parish. It is a censure. Don't think harshly of Father O'Hanlon. I insulted him, which he was willing to forget. I shall explain all when I see you.

I want to say one word now. You will hear your name connected with my removal. Fearing some of my friends, who are concerned chiefly for my worldly preferment, may speak harsh things against you, I wish first to speak my gratitude. You know with what high thought I entered my sacred calling, and how imperceptibly I was passing over to a mere rule of life that allowed increasing leisure for society and amusement. I, who had had a great dream for the Glory of God, was slowly but surely being folded in by the glory of the world. But your hand saved me. When you strove passionately in your own way, you made clearer to me mine. Sincerely I say you

have brought me back to the heart of great things. When I say this to you, you will understand. When I say it to others, they will call it my infatuation, and revile you the more for my sake: and for my sake you will remember. For then I must think how my pleading further for you increases what you must endure for me; and I must remain silent. But I, too, will remember.

For ever,

JACK.

Con (his feeling heightened in tone as he read). If they were all like him!

(Hugh had dropped his head in his hands as Con read—he remains silent, making no sign. Knock. Rohan and Keane enter followed by three club-mates. Hugh, roused, rises.)

SCENE II

HUGH, CON, ROHAN, KEANE, AND THE THREE FOLLOWERS.

Rohan (leading, the others not quite easy behind him). Good-day, both.

Hugh (rising). Welcome, all.

(The depressed mood leaves him again, the fighting instinct awake. He is alert and keen.)

Keane. Home again, Sheehan.

Con. Yes. I came over for news.

Rohan. We've come to try and persuade O'Neill to adapt himself to the decision of the meeting.

Hugh. Where exactly do we stand now?

Rohan. The tactics against which we were so resolute must go. Your fight helped us there. It is settled.

Keane. But with difficulty.

Con. Is it safe, then?

Rohan. Doyle really saved the situation. He threatened to throw over the whole undertaking unless they made the decision—you know the first meeting had to be adjourned? 'Twas decided at the second.

Con. Was the decision unanimous?

Keane. No—a small majority.

Con. Then it's not safe.

Rohan. But we can't look for smashing triumphs. We must be glad to win.

Hugh. That's to decide merely what's not to be done. What did they decide should be done?

Rohan. Well—organize generally.

Hugh. And the organization?

Rohan. Is to be secret.

Hugh. That means men will go on making a virtue of not professing openly what they believe.

Rohan. You put it your own way.

Hugh. This is an admitted evil. Now we actually foster it.

Rohan. You know we agree with you largely. We fought this point, too, but were in a minority. 'Twas the old story. We must be careful and bring men on gradually.

Hugh. We don't bring them on: they drag us down.

Rohan. It's a matter of judgment—there may even be a risk. But seeing what we have carried, can you for the rest resist the majority?

Hugh. If the majority are walking blindfold into a quicksand, should I jump in with my eyes open?

Rohan. You exaggerate it.

Hugh. No, but I lay it bare.

Rohan. Others don't think so. Are you justified in holding out?

Hugh. That question has been asked from the first fight made on earth and will be asked to the last.

Rohan. It's a grave question.

Hugh. Yes; there's a graver risk than death,—it's not being justified.

Rohan. If everyone took your line, where would it lead?

Hugh. That's a corrective. It never leaves my mind.

Rohan. We don't want to seem like leaving you in the lurch. We want to find a common way. You don't make it easy for us, O'Neill.

Hugh. I'm not making it easy for myself, Rohan.

Rohan (a little confused). True—well,—we thought you should fall in and decided six of us would speak with you.

Hugh. Where's the sixth? (*Rohan does not answer at once.*)

Keane. Lawlor was to come.

Con. Where is Lawlor?

Rohan (constrained). He avoided us. He went into the Carnival yesterday.

Hugh. Did you hear the circumstances?

Rohan. What have the circumstances to do with it?

Hugh. His position was particularly hard.

Rohan. You don't extenuate his action?

Hugh. We must consider everything.

Rohan (some heat). Do you defend him?

Hugh. I was in a similar position.

Rohan (his manner has become challenging). Do you mean to say you went in? It's selling the pass.

Hugh (quiet in contrast to Rohan, excitement among the others). No; I broke with friends at the gate. But I've never yet found anything so hard.

Rohan (in revulsion of feeling, holding out his hand). I'm sorry for what I said. (*Hugh takes his hand cordially.*)

Hugh. I'm afraid the fellows think me very stubborn, but perhaps the stubbornness saved me in

a tight place. I don't like to admit how near I was to going into that Carnival—and then you know what would have been said. That's why I feel for Lawlor. He was always a good fellow, but our surreptitious meetings have made men unfit to look others straight in the eyes and say what they mean and where they stand. My obstinacy is a safeguard against tripping.—The habit of resistance will save a man when his feelings would spin him over.—If you object to it, you can't fairly come down on Lawlor. The matter is troublesome either way and complicated.—One of our fellows complained I was contemptuous of his opinion. He had delivered judgment off-hand without a thought on a point that I was tired of thinking over without result; and I lost my temper with him. That's no excuse, of course. There may be some perfect way of doing the right thing, but I'm not the one to find it. I wish there were at least a way out of the deadlock, but we may sacrifice too much for peace. (*Pause. The others are silent a moment.*)

Keane (hesitating and dubious). You've a good name among the fellows, you know. But they won't accept all you say—and some of them are saying hard things now.

Hugh (with a faint momentary smile). Then we may have to sacrifice our reputations with our peace.

Rohan. There's force in all you say, O'Neill. But we must take men as they are, and things as they come. We must bring the crowd along lines they will accept.

Hugh. The Lawlor incident will continue to recur.

Rohan. It's after all only an incident.

Hugh. Incidents, suggestions, trifles—these give us our bearings. We can't debate them at meetings. We ignore them and go wrong.

Keane. There's much to be said either way. When we're in a minority we can yield as a duty.

Hugh. It may be a duty to resist.

Keane. I don't think so in this case.—But it's not easy to recall one's words.

(Keane's manner is not open, but there's no nasty implication in his words. He is ill at ease and makes an unhappy remark.)

Hugh (flushing). If a man finds himself wrong, not to recall his words is nothing but cowardice.

Keane (awkwardly). You know we agree with you generally—but we don't think it right to stand out—I've an appointment—I must go.

(He is moving to the door, rather clumsily, as if anxious to get out of a difficulty, yet not able to do it in a firm, direct way. The three followers are taking their cue from him and moving also. He goes out; they pause and speak in turns, before going.)

First Member. We got it in confidence Doyle won't let Bennett and the others have the old pull in the future.

Hugh. In every movement we'll have trouble from men who're not broadminded and above-board. I'm not afraid of this while our main line of action is true. That's why we must be careful in our main decision.

First Member. If you won't agree, I don't see why we should wait.

Hugh. I'm sorry if you must go. *(First Member goes.)*

Second Member. If you come in, you'll get a place on the committee—even an officership. I may say that was suggested.

Hugh. It's not a desire for place any more than dislike of persons that is the trouble. Need we keep on touching this?

Second Member. Oh, if you're going to get huffy, I don't see why we should wait, either. *(He goes.)*

Third Member. We came at Rohan's suggestion

to show the fellows are well-disposed. You should show good example to the crowd.

Hugh. I'm grateful for your good-will. The difficulty still remains.

Third Member. We can't do any more. (*He goes.*)

SCENE III

HUGH, CON, ROHAN.

Hugh. They are all gone, Rohan.

Rohan. And I must go. You say nothing, Sheehan.

Con. I speak little, you know. Facts count with me; and the Lawlor incident is an eloquent fact.

Rohan. What can we accomplish standing alone?

Hugh. This, if nothing more—make the right course clearer and well remembered for others who will some time have to return to it.

Rohan. You make the mistake, O'Neill, of asking too much.

Hugh. We won't rouse men by asking them to do a little.

Rohan. But you ask them at every turn to do the heroic. Where are the men to do it?

Hugh. There are men in every village in Ireland will do it—if we give them the lead.

Rohan. You know the appeal is taken with suspicion now.

Hugh. Rohan, you're not afraid of death, I'm sure; but I think you're afraid of being called a hero.

Rohan. Have we not reason to dread the name?

Hugh. It has come to this, then: we won't give play to our better instincts because there are cynics about. We allow them to constrain us to dissemble feelings it should be our shame not to have. Is this to our credit?

Rohan (with feeling). I think we understand each

other, O'Neill. I don't mean to flatter, but you seem to me born out of your time, and to belong to an age when men fought forlorn hopes readily. You don't see it's otherwise now. But I do. I would welcome the braver times again; your spirit appeals to me; but I must follow my reason. That way lies success.

(As Rohan speaks a faint questioning smile starts and goes as quickly from Hugh's face, leaving it clouded.)

Hugh. We won't be asked to die for our convictions. That possibility is receding. But, Rohan, let us have no wrong notions of success. Emmet's last words move us more than any possible oration he might have delivered as first president of the Irish Republic. Men standing by a premature grave are apt to reconsider their hasty judgments and indolent lives. Then who has succeeded? That, I think, is the moral we need to point now at a time when in a natural desire for majorities and armies it is being obscured.

Rohan. I am with you in spirit; but this is a calculating age. I can't put that by—and I don't like going—

Hugh (holding out his hand). We won't be worse friends, Rohan.

Rohan (shaking hands with feeling). Good-bye.

Hugh. Good-bye.

Rohan. Good-bye, Sheehan. *(They shake hands. Rohan goes out.)*

SCENE IV

HUGH AND CON.

Con (after a short pause—Hugh is silent till Con questions). What do you think?

Hugh. Rohan is a fine type, but too reasonable ever to take fire: and we want men to go through the land like a torch.

Con. I'm surprised at Keane.

Hugh. Yet, Keane could take fire—he didn't show to the best advantage, relying altogether on reason.

Con. He used to be strong on the secrecy question.

Hugh. He's afraid of being thought a coward. It's the hardest fear to kill. 'Twould reduce an army to a handful.

Con. Well, we must give things a rest now.

Hugh. No, we must do something at once.

Con. Take care. You were nearly prostrate when I came in.

Hugh. Oh, a fit of depression after a sleepless night. They've shaken it off.

Con. You'll overdo it.

Hugh. Nonsense. We can't fold our arms.

Con. Watch developments for a month or so.

Hugh. When I rest I'm alarmed at the way I lose a grip of things.

Con. Well, a week or two only—what can you do?

Hugh. When I saw how things were going, it came to me in a flash—a paper's the thing.

Con. But 'twould cost money,

Hugh. We could begin with a little. Luckily I've been economizing and saving with a view to a continental holiday. That can wait. I've about £30. Can you do anything?

Con. Yes. You make me hope in spite of myself.

Hugh. As much?

Con. Something more. I've a little fund aside for general business contingencies—not urgent. I can put hands on £70. That with yours makes £100.

Hugh. Capital!—in two senses. We can run a small weekly for £8 a week, all expenses covered for three months. Who knows what may happen then? I feel a breath of new life.

Con. Think no more of it to-day. I want you to come out and see Fan.

Hugh. Yes—I'll follow. I want to see Curran, the printer.

Con. Let us think it over for a week.

Hugh. We must be in print next week.

Con. Don't rush it. Take a little care. The strain will fall on you. Let Curran wait till to-morrow.

Hugh. But we must arrange with him at once.

Con (desisting from persuasion). Any danger of a clash with the others?

Hugh (this gives him thought, he sits). No; but on the whole it's well we're alone. Even with a small crowd it would be hard to keep bitterness out.

(Pause. He is thinking.)

Con. What are you thinking of?

Hugh. The situation with Father O'Hanlon will require very delicate handling. He is arrogant, unjust, fond of power and determined to keep it, but withal he has a sincere feeling for religion. Doyle won't see it and that means trouble. On the other hand, if you tell Father O'Hanlon that Doyle will probably save his soul as well as he will, it would be a deadly insult to Father O'Hanlon. Neither of them is unscrupulous but each of them believes the other is. No committee ever made could deal with such a situation.

Con. Come; I'll go with you to the printer. We'll talk it over on the way. *(Moving.)*

Hugh (rising). This paper won't be permanent. We want a flash of lightning to clear the air—then back to normal fine weather.

Con. That sounds like a revolution.

Hugh. Yes; and that we may not be swept in it, we must direct it.

Con. We want a good name.

Hugh. Yes—to put us at once at the head.

Con. You have it——

Hugh. Simple and good—The Revolutionist.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

SECOND PLACE. *At Sheehans' House.*

(The house is on a terrace, beyond the city, overlooking the bay.)

SCENE I

FAN AND NORA.

(They are seated, Nora on the sofa, Fan a little apart on a chair. A silence has fallen as after a long talk. Fan is carefully studying Nora, who is unconscious of it. Nora is quiet and subdued in comparison with her earlier manner.)

Fan. You don't seem yourself, Nora.

Nora (a little surprise). How?

Fan. I don't know.

Nora. You don't know! *(affected amusement).* Tell me something more of your happy time.

Fan. Words are exhausted.

Nora. Yes—I suppose it's indescribable,

Fan (with sudden directness). What was the Carnival like?

Nora (reserved). Deadly.

Fan. Molly Keane said the party enjoyed it.

Nora. Indeed.

Fan. Nora, what about Hugh O'Neill?

Nora. What about him?

Fan (indirect). Molly Keane said they failed to get him in.

Nora (evasive smile). Is she interested?

Fan. Do tell me about it.

Nora. What—Molly Keane and Hugh O'Neill?

Fan. You are nasty, Nora. You know Con would like to hear of Hugh's adventure. I heard you and he parted at the door of the Carnival.

Nora. Well—we parted at the door. That's all.

Fan (baffled by Nora's calm manner). I'm sorry.

Nora (unmoved). Since our tastes differed was it not best?

Fan. But it was unpleasant.

Nora. Who said so? Why should it be?

Fan (trying a new attack). I suppose you didn't mind. But it would be unlike Hugh O'Neill. I imagine he found it unpleasant.

Nora (hit, her manner changes). I was to blame.

Fan (quickly). They should not have left it to you.

Nora (her reserve broken—halting). 'Twas my fault—I showed no disinclination—was in a rather flippant mood—they thought I wanted it so——

Fan. Nora—you are fretting.

Nora (forcing indifference—it fails). Fretting! oh, no.

Fan. You're forgetting the old promise.

Nora. What promise?

Fan. Confidences.

Nora. There are no confidences. (*Fan says nothing, but keeps looking at Nora. It draws Nora to admission.*) I'm ashamed.

Fan. Ashamed—why?

Nora. Don't ask me.

Fan. Won't you trust me?

Nora. There's nothing more: simply, I'm ashamed.

Fan (coming and sitting by Nora on the sofa). Tell me about it. I see it's on your mind. Why, if it makes no difference, should you fret?

Nora (giving way and speaking freely). I did every-

thing to get him in—laughed, mocked, coaxed ; stood on my dignity one moment, tried to wheedle him the next. How he must despise me !

Fan. No, no, what did he say ?

Nora. First he was patient ; then angry ; then silent ; then he let me go in disdain.

Fan. Silent—what did that mean ? Would you have been glad if he had gone in ?

Nora. Don't talk of it.

Fan. Would you have been glad ? Tell me, *Nora*.

Nora (a pause). 'Twould have amused me, perhaps—but I'd have despised him.

Fan (with relief). I'm glad he held out. (*Nora covers her face in her hands a moment. Fan puts her arms around her in sympathy.*) What is it, *Nora* ?

Nora. I am unhappy.

Fan. Ah,—if you would speak freely.

Nora (her feelings have been well under control—they now escape her). I thought I was indifferent ; I'm not. I said I didn't care ; it's not true.

Fan (softly). I think I understand.

Nora. No, no, you can't.

Fan (caressing). You won't be annoyed if I say it ?

Nora. You can't understand.

Fan. I think you care for *Hugh*.

Nora. Not that, not that.

Fan. Try and tell me.

Nora. Not that : I don't want to see him or hear him or touch him—if he were here I would fly—but he has got into my brain ; he has spoiled my peace ; I have no rest and I can't think. Oh, I know nothing, nothing, but the pain of it.—You're wrong, *Fan*. You think I—I—love him, that I—want him, to—marry him. No, I want to forget—to clear my mind—it's burning my brain, burning—it's a weight crushing me—

Fan. *Nora*, my dear *Nora*, you're wrong, indeed you are.

Nora. You can't see.

Fan. Listen. I think you've suddenly realized something and got terribly afraid.

Nora. Not afraid—oh, if I could only die. I've prayed so intensely to die. But I know I shan't for a long time. I'm never ill. I'll live to be old, old, and I can't get peace. My thoughts are aw whirl—they leave me weak—I can't stop——

Fan. This is the parting, *Nora*, and the fear he despises you.

Nora. Don't talk of it—I ask you again.

Fan. Is it not ?

Nora. Don't.

Fan. I want to tell you what I think.

Nora. I know he despises me.

Fan (softly). I think he loves you, *Nora*.

Nora (leaping away from her as if whipped). Don't say it; it's not true; and I don't care—I want to forget. I tell you I want to forget. Let me——

Fan. You can't; 'twould be a sin if you could.

Nora (sinks into a chair). Oh, I can't, I can't.

Fan (standing up). If he were here—(*Nora starts up again.*) Don't make a mistake; it might be terrible.

Nora. I entreat you to say no more.

Fan. Listen. Con will be here soon. He went to see Hugh. He'll tell us something.

Nora (in alarm). I can't see him now.—*He* won't come ?

Fan. Hugh—don't be afraid.

Nora (a little excited). I can't see anyone. I must go before Con comes. I couldn't speak to him now.

Fan. You'd run into him. Come and bathe your face and you can return here—to the piano—that will be a refuge—a good excuse from speaking. Con won't think of disturbing you.

Nora (as Fan leads her in). Oh, I am miserable.

Fan. Quick, I hear a step. I'll return and bring Con out of the way.

(They go out left. Con comes in from right immediately. After a moment Fan returns.)

SCENE II

CON AND FAN.

Fan (eagerly). Did you see Hugh?

Con. Yes; he's coming—nearly failed me.

Fan. How?

Con. I found him in such depression.

Fan. Anything wrong?

Con. We were wondering if he cared for Nora—

Fan. Yes.

Con. Well—the secret's out. He makes no pretence of hiding it from us now. The parting both woke him up and stunned him. He was brooding over it when I found him. While we talked, some fellows came in with proposals he disliked and gave him matter to contest; that roused him—otherwise—

Fan. And she has confessed to me; but she has no distraction. She has the one thought and is nearly prostrate.

Con (in surprise). Nora?

Fan. Yes—she's here.

Con. And she cares?

Fan. I've had an amazing five minutes. I suspected and drew her out and she let herself go. She took my breath away. She's gone to bathe her face.

Con. Hugh will be here soon.

Fan. I promised to keep you out of the way.—I'll put him in the way. *(Con gives her a quick look of admiration first, then of dissent.)* If they meet suddenly, when they least expect it—

Con (decisive). It would not be wise.

Fan. What do you mean?

Con. It can do no good.

Fan. I'm determined they'll find each other out.

Con. For what purpose? Suppose they were engaged and this occasion arose and they parted—it would be worse.

Fan (impatiently). Oh, your calculations!

Con. Nora has not been brought up with any of Hugh's sympathies in these matters. She can't drop into his way of thought now as a matter of course—and the way is far-reaching. They both have character; 'twould mean contention.

Fan. They both have love.

Con. Love is not enough. Without mutual sympathy and understanding, they would be very unhappy.

Fan. Is such an attachment so common that you can calmly let it go? I can't. Let them find each other out, if they were to die five minutes after, or quarrel to the end of their days.

Con. Fan, you're right. There's no time to lose. How shall we manage?

Fan. You must not be here. Find an excuse to run to town.

Con. That's easily done.

Fan. Leave the rest to me. (*A bell is heard.*)

Con. Someone ringing—Hugh. I'm off. (*Going.*)

Fan. Remember, say nothing to Hugh. I must bring him clear of this room awhile. (*They both go out, right.*)

SCENE III

HUGH AND NORA.

(*The stage is empty a moment. Nora comes first, quieter but troubled. She enters slowly from left, pauses at the door; moves slowly to the table; stands*

a moment in thought. It has grown dark. She lights up, sits, takes a book, turns a page or two, closes the book ; rests, head in hands a moment ; gets up ; turns off the light ; the moonlight is coming in ; she goes to the window in the back ; sits ; rests, head bent, chin in hand. She is looking out over the bay : the tide is full ; clouds are floating across the moon, which is now hidden, now clear and naked, issuing from a shining gateway of the clouds, making heaven glorious. The great stillness of the night touches her like an invisible presence ; and there is fascination in the changing light on the waters and the slow movement from the sea.—Pause.—She rises with a deep breath ; goes to the piano slowly ; sits still awhile ; her hands stray softly over the keys ; then she plays a beautiful melody, low and lingering ; gradually her voice is detected rising in the music ; soon it breaks softly and clearly into song :

Love is born and Peace is slain—
 Lo! at her dream she falls in dread.
 Her love is true love, wild with pain—
 And Peace that was sweet, is dead.

Hasten and bury deep desire
 Out where the moonlit waters are—
 Ah, but Love burns a stronger fire
 Than sun or moon or star.

Just as the song begins, Hugh appears at the door, left, where she had entered and pauses. He comes quietly in, sits near the window in the shadow, rapt in the music and the singer. She sings to the end. He makes an unconscious movement ; the stir attracts her ; she turns quickly ; leaps up startled ; draws hastily back. There is mutual constraint : she, voiceless ; he, murmuring an apology.)

Hugh. I'm sorry. I thought no one was here—till I heard the music. There seemed no need to withdraw.

Nora (about to retire, left). I wish to be alone.

Hugh (interposing). Then I shall go.

Nora (trying to pass). No, no, I will.

Hugh. Fan will be annoyed if I disturb you. She's engaged a moment. Allow me. (*He is withdrawing, left.*)

Nora. I don't wish you to go.

(*She feels conscious of having shown a trace of panic, which she wishes to dispel. She makes an effort to recover herself.*)

Hugh (pausing). Then, if you don't mind—

Nora (now self-possessed). Oh, I don't mind. I was simply out of sorts and wished to be alone. (*He is silent, watching her. She moves in a tired indifferent way—now half smiles at him, perceiving he is still embarrassed.*) It makes no matter. Sit down. (*She sits.*) How are you? (*Her tone quite matter-of-fact.*)

Hugh (he remains standing, disconcerted). Must we remain on ceremony?

Nora. Why—no.

Hugh (her perfect calm keeps him at a disadvantage). I must be out of sorts, too. I've simply no small talk. Could you forget I'm here and go to the piano again?

Nora. I can't forget you're here.

(*She does not stress the "you," but the suggestion comes to him, and he gives her a searching look. She meets his gaze and intuition is swift between them. Her colour rises faintly and she loses her advantage a little. He notices this and gains more ease of manner.*)

Hugh. The music will assure me I've not disturbed you.

Nora. But you have disturbed me and stopped it.

(*She affects lightness of manner to recover her advantage.*)

Hugh (coming nearer to the piano). Can I not start it again?

Nora (sitting some distance away, with an air of unconcern). No; talk of something.

Hugh. I can only talk now—of what's on my mind.

(There is a hint of intimacy. Quite unconsciously, it slips out. She feels it touch her, but dissembles with a light remark.)

Nora. Then, I'm surprised you came in when you saw me here.

Hugh. The music drew me and—(pause)—I came straight to this room as if by instinct.

(His gaze, full of meaning, bent steadily on her, sends the colour swift and vivid mounting in her face. She is conscious of it and that he sees it and is in her turn disconcerted. The light manner is dropped.)

Nora. I thought you'd have despised me.

Hugh. Why?

Nora. Need you ask?

Hugh. If we could respect and despise people at will, it might be better for our peace of mind.

Nora. Always a riddle.

Hugh. I can't talk. Won't you play?

(He feels he's letting slip an advantage. He's undecided, urging her to play, while wishing her to talk.)

Nora. Is it not clear you've put me off?

Hugh. An unhappy intrusion.

Nora. Oh, not at all—(a pause, looking at him, then a sudden plunge into her difficulty.)—There's something on my mind. I wanted to tell you—that day of the Carnival, I was annoyed over my action—ashamed of my behaviour—

Hugh. It was not easy to stay out.

Nora. I'd have despised you, had you gone in,

Hugh. I'm grateful for that,

Nora. There—talk of something else now.

(Her taking the plunge makes him light up. She sees it and tries to recover her light manner, but without success. The confidence has passed from her to him.)

Hugh. We might say more of this.

Nora. Why—do you think of it still?—Let it be.

Hugh. If you wish—it's off my mind now.

(There's significance in his words and in the growing light of his eyes. It sends a tremor through her.)

Nora. What do you mean? *(Startled at her own directness, she immediately turns the point.)*—I can't understand your persistence. So few care for your ideas.

Hugh. It's not our ideas are at fault but ourselves.—It may be we're given the work of angels and the nature of men,—and the man cuts a sorry figure at times.

Nora. But the angels must be envious at other times.

(The sudden flash of admiration makes him glow, but the word it draws is self-reproach. She sees it is spontaneous and sincere. It heightens her warmth. She forgets reserve.)

Hugh. I'm afraid some of us damage our cause. I've often done it.

Nora. You're too generous.

Hugh *(flushing—intense with pleasure)*. I'm glad you say it.

Nora *(the sudden consciousness of her warmth and its effect on him sends her own colour mounting again. Her attempt at diversion has led her nearer to intimacy. Yet, she is less ready to put up her guard)*. But with everyone against you—

Hugh. Not quite everyone. Yet, when things seem just hopeless someone is always found to do a brave thing or a beautiful thing, that renews the fire and we're ready to begin again as from the first.

Nora. You're not bitter.

Hugh. You praise me.

Nora. But people mock you.

Hugh. They're not indifferent, I think; only at heart afraid. That is the secret. That is fate. Do you remember saying, "Come; it's fate?"

Nora. Now, you're ungenerous.

Hugh. No—listen: at the elbow of each one of us is some dim fear: one man is afraid to live, another is afraid to die; one will even despise the dread that haunts another—and soon shrink at his own. For each one is shadowed by his secret fear; that fear is Fate; and our battle is to stand up to it, to conquer it: it is the mortal offence against Life to yield to Fate. The battle brings us all together as comrades; the dread is in me; it's in you; standing by each other, we can face it—where we feel it the battle lies—

Nora. Stop! (*In his warmth he comes nearer. She rises abruptly in sudden fear. They are both full-strung; he, quick, warm, and fluent, now quite unconstrained; she, her light manner quite gone, a prey to conflicting feelings, difficult of speech.*) You turn my thoughts on myself. I don't want that.

Hugh. The only happiness worth a fight is at stake.

Nora. I admit I'm afraid.

Hugh. Fear cannot live under a steady gaze, if only we do not falter.

Nora (*she stops him with a motion. He stands silent. She moves to the piano. Her voice is low*). I think I will play.

Hugh (*coming nearer*). Not awhile—talk.

Nora. I can't now.—(*He is nearer. She tries to fence.*) Your head is in the clouds.

Hugh. But my feet are on the good firm earth.

Nora. There's danger in the clouds.

Hugh. We must pierce the clouds for the stars.

Nora. I have no strength for the flight.

Hugh. You do not know your strength.

Nora. I can't argue. You are too quick—and I am just dull earth.

Hugh (alongside her). God made the earth divine when He touched it with His Hands. (*Unconsciously his hand is on her arm. At the touch she trembles.*)

Nora. Did you not ask me to play? (*Turning for refuge to the piano.*)

Hugh. Let us speak now. (*In an impulse he takes her hand.*)

Nora. Please let me.

Hugh. I want to speak.

Nora. You're holding my hand.

Hugh. May I not?

Nora. Please let go.

Hugh. There. (*She draws back. He remains still a moment, then follows, his hand out.*)

Nora. What?

Hugh. Give it again.

Nora (giving her hand, agitated). What do you mean?

Hugh. And the other.

Nora (giving the other hand, trembling). I am afraid.

Hugh. You fear me?

Nora (barely audible). Why keep my hands?

Hugh. I need them.

(*His grasp is firm and passionate. He feels her tremble. It sends fire to his eyes that she cannot mistake.*)

Nora. What is it?—ah, speak.

Hugh. I love you.

Nora. You—love—me?

Hugh. You have not said it.

Nora (almost voiceless). I love you.

Hugh (folding her in). Oh, my beloved.

Nora (in a passion of surrender, clinging to him).
For ever.

- Hugh.* You are quivering.
Nora. You are on fire.
Hugh. A breath from Heaven.
Nora. I am not afraid now.
Hugh. Nora—speak it.
Nora. Hugh, my beloved.
Hugh. We two have killed fear.
Nora. Oh, to dissolve in this joy.
Hugh. It will endure for ever.
Nora. For ever.
Hugh. It will dominate pain for ever.
Nora. Pain could not last in your embrace.
Hugh. God makes His wonder of your eyes.
Nora. Beloved.
Hugh. For ever and for ever.
Nora. Beloved.
Hugh. For ever.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

FIRST PLACE. *At Sheehans' House.*

SCENE I

CON AND FAN.

(They are seated, talking seriously, both troubled.)

Fan. Why wait a year? I feel this delay will end in nothing good. They should have married at once. I said so from the beginning.

Con. Well, most of the time has slipped. And with Christmas over us, we'll be through the winter quickly. It's fixed for the spring.

Fan. He may be on a sick bed before the spring. Why don't you restrain him?

Con. I've tried and failed. I'm surprised Nora never worries.

Fan. He's always in splendid form and spirits with her.—Why does he not hasten things?

Con. Before their engagement he had put everything into the paper. A little delay was necessary.

Fan. Money?—She has some. And Mr. Mangan is very friendly over the match—more than I expected.

Con. Yes, but you could understand Hugh's not wanting to call on her money at once.

Fan. But the paper is a success.

Con. Yes; but at first he dreaded a smash—not that he feared she wouldn't face anything. He

wanted the smash to take place before they had anything definite done. The unexpected success complicated things.

Fan (impatiently). Oh, men's calculations! Everything staked on them and not once in a hundred times right.

Con. But it seemed to be the wish of both of them—I don't know how. She's quite happy and untroubled.

Fan. I think she needs a shock. Do you notice nothing strange about her? I've an unaccountable feeling—it seems silly, perhaps,—but—her manner makes me uneasy. She seems to go about in a dream, looking forward to the time when Hugh comes to her or she goes to him—never beyond that. The future seems vague and marriage some beautiful but far-off promised land. I was talking to her here last week—we were waiting for Hugh—and it suddenly struck me from some word of hers. I questioned her bluntly in surprise and she started as if I had touched a secret presentiment. Then she recovered with a little laugh and told me of their plans: the sort of home they meant to have, the site they were looking for, the aspect they would like; and then I made some reference to Hugh's coming and all talk of their plans fell away like an unreal thing. I could see there was but one thought present to her mind—the immediate moment he would arrive; and he came and in a flash was in the room and my half-formed resolve to give them a lecture vanished. Their eyes shone at each other. It seemed as if the sun suddenly conquered everything with a great light, and we could not speak of lesser things. There was a great heightening of spirits—I was caught in it myself. Hugh carried her off, laughing and buoyant. And I knew why she saw no danger: when they are together all fear shrinks away from the light of their presence. But when

they were gone, in the common light I knew commonplace people would be safer.

Con. That's very strange—I've been vaguely uneasy, too; but can't tell why. I never understood either of them thoroughly. Now they seem to have found the secret of each other and it has excluded everything.

Fan. Can we do nothing?

Con. I was speaking to Foley and suggested a friendly word from him to Hugh.

Fan. Yes?

Con. He promised it, should he get an opening. If he has anything to tell me, he'll call.

(Knock. Servant comes.)

Servant. Father O'Connor, ma'am.

(She shows the priest in and withdraws. Con and Fan rise and cordially welcome Father O'Connor.)

SCENE II

CON, FAN, AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Con. Welcome, Father O'Connor.

Father O'Connor. An unexpected visit.

Fan. The greater the pleasure. *(They all sit.)*

Con. What may we thank for it?

Father O'Connor. A special run to town for a few days. Having a little free time, I'm looking up a few old friends.

Fan. Did you see Hugh O'Neill?

Father O'Connor. I called. He was out.

Fan. Of course, you know of his impending marriage.

Father O'Connor. Yes—but it's some way off yet. He looks forward to it and writes in great spirits.

Fan. Yes. If he were not in great spirits he would be more manageable.

Father O'Connor. Why, what is he doing?

Fan. His own undoing.

Father O'Connor. He was always apt to put on too much pressure——

Con. That's the danger. The reason now is rather unusual. He told you of the paper, I suppose.

Father O'Connor. Yes, and said 'twas a great success.

Con. Failure is generally the trouble. 'Tis success now. He was tireless in making it a success; the more it succeeds, the more he works to maintain it. He goes off at week-ends organizing and doing next to impossible things.

Father O'Connor. The week-end takes him into the open. His danger is too much confinement.

Con. That's one danger—there's another. The week-end is not normal. There are two fires.

Father O'Connor. Yes.

Con. No matter how far off he goes, he tries to get back to have some time with Nora. He will leave on a Saturday afternoon and come back after midnight or well into Sunday morning, which means lying down only for an hour or two before Mass.—That's not the rule, of course; but it's the sort of thing he does. Last week he cycled ten miles in blinding rain to catch the down night-mail from the north, got wet through, had a couple of hours cold journey, which soaked the rain into him and gave him a dangerous cold.

Father O'Connor. That can't last. Could she not go to meet him?

Fan. She did at first—not satisfactory. They want solitude or the city. Small towns, she says, are hopeless; there you've neither privacy nor company. He always comes back now.

Father O'Connor. Does she never see the strain?

Con. That puzzles me. But when he has changed and brushed up, it's surprising how little obvious it is.

His normal appearance is quite deceptive, and he is so apt to get animated and flushed with anything that interests him, you'd never suspect.

Fan. You could give him a word of advice.

Con. I spoke to Foley to the same effect.

Father O'Connor. I met Foley. He was in a hurry—but said he would be giving you a call.

Con. Then he has seen Hugh and has something to say. (*Knock. Foley comes unannounced.*)

SCENE III

CON, FAN, FATHER O'CONNOR, DR. FOLEY.

Foley. Excuse my lack of ceremony.

Con (rising). Ah, Foley, come along. (*The others rise. Foley shakes hands with the three.*)

Fan. We were just talking of you.

Father O'Connor. I said you were coming.

Con. You saw O'Neill?

Foley. Yes.

Fan. Well?

Foley. He's very obstinate.

Con. We know that—but his condition?

Foley. Dangerous. If he does not change his ways, he'll break up.

Fan. Did you examine him?

Foley. Yes, after great trouble. He wanted to pooh-pooh the notion.

Father O'Connor. What is your frank opinion?

Foley. He's run down to the last degree—heart slightly affected—see the danger? There's no reason why he shouldn't live for another twenty or thirty or even forty years—even more—if he will give himself ordinary care. If he won't, 'twill get rapidly worse and he may come down like that. (*Striking one hand in the other.*)

Father O'Connor. Did you tell him so?

Foley. Yes—he laughed. I think he's a bit conceited about his indifference to mere material things.

Father O'Connor. Likely enough. In the general contempt for things not material, he may go to the other extreme.

Foley (dogmatic). A man must look after his body.

Father O'Connor. Yes; but it's not the one consideration. Remember that and we can take it at its proper importance.

Foley (with some irritation). That's his excuse for taking it as of no importance.

Father O'Connor. That will never do.

Foley (mollified by Father O'Connor's acquiescence). But you don't know how aggravating he is. (*Turning to Con and Fan.*) You don't know he came to me a couple of months ago for a prescription for bad headaches. (*They show much surprise.*) I asked him this morning if he had taken the bottle. He said, yes. I asked him had he finished it. He said, almost. I asked him why he had not finished it quite. He assured me it had done him good.—That was evasion—I was determined to hear the end of that bottle—— (*deliberate pause.*)

Fan. Yes.

Foley. He flung it out of the window at a cat.

(There is a curious blend of the serious and the grotesque. Con and Fan more than the priest are concerned to hear of Hugh's private visits to the doctor; but the contrast in Foley's manner and grievance is so comical, that their first remarks only heighten it, though they feel the seriousness beneath.)

Fan. Perhaps there was nothing else to hand.

Foley. That's what he said; that's no excuse.

Con. But a cat on the wall when you're trying to sleep.

Foley. He made fun of the whole thing—said he didn't hit the cat, and the cat didn't go away. What could you do with such a man?

Father O'Connor. I never suspected from his letters that anything was wrong.

Foley (more gravely). It's my belief O'Neill himself doesn't see it. A man in fair condition has a reserve of health; he can overwork and draw on that reserve; he never realizes he's running himself out, till the reserve is gone: then it's too late. That's O'Neill's case. He's drawing on his reserve; it's practically used up, but he won't believe it.

Father O'Connor. That's serious.

Foley (sarcastic). The Cause! What will the Cause do when we're dead?

Father O'Connor. If you're sarcastic touching what moves him, he'll be sarcastic touching what moves you.

Foley. O'Neill is a born disturber—

Father O'Connor. On a pilgrimage of peace.

Foley. I wish we could make him afraid of something. Your man who knows no fear may be a fine fellow, but he's very hard to manage.

Con (quietly). Foley, he knew fear intimately and strangled it by inches.

Foley (gaping a little). We can't stop him—I'm afraid.

Fan. Oh, we must do something.

Foley. In his present condition he's a subject for any disease that's in the air. Healthy men are safe from things that will fasten on him as easy prey. If he's pinned, don't think it's an accident.

Father O'Connor. You're right. It's very grave.

Foley. If a man goes against nature, nature will call him to account.

Con. That is true.

Foley (moving). I've some calls to make. I must be off. (*To Fan who is also moving.*) Now, don't come. (*To the others.*) Good-bye.

Con. Good-bye.

Father O'Connor. Thanks for your frank information. I must see if I can do anything.

Fan (as they go). It was very good of you to come out of your way. (*Fan and Foley go out right.*)

SCENE IV

CON AND FATHER O'CONNOR.

Con. It's a hard case to deal with.

Father O'Connor. Yes; using his reserve of strength is the simple thing to baffle us.

Con. When could you see him?

Father O'Connor. Now?

Con. I think so. When in town, he's never long absent from his rooms.

Father O'Connor. I'll go at once. It's imperative.

Con. I hope you'll see him.

Father O'Connor. I'll be in town in any case for a few days.

Con. You'll surely see him in that time.

Father O'Connor. I trust to some effect.

Con. May we expect a call?

Father O'Connor. Yes—if I have good news.

(*They go out. Con returns, Fan following.*)

SCENE V

CON AND FAN.

Con. Foley's news is bad.

Fan. Father O'Connor is gone to see Hugh?

Con. Yes.

Fan (uneasy). Hugh will be off somewhere to-morrow.

Con. You know he said he'd be in town this week-end.

Fan. You know something will turn up. (*Knock without.*)

Con. Who can that be ?

Fan. Some one running up—Hugh's step.

Con. Yes. Leave him to me.

Fan. If it's another journey, I'll let him see my anger now. (*Fan opens the door and Hugh enters. He is noticeably changed, quick and animated as ever, but in appearance pale and drawn.*)

SCENE VI

FAN, CON, AND HUGH.

Fan (greeting him). Hugh:—just speaking of you. Father O'Connor was here—hardly gone a moment—went to see you.

Hugh (in surprise). He's in town ?

Fan. You could overtake him.

Hugh. Is he leaving at once ?

Con. He'll be in town a few days.

Hugh. Then I'll see him again. I want to tell you of a run for to-morrow.

Fan (a touch of anger). You were to do nothing this week-end.

Hugh. Something unforeseen.

Fan (more anger). It's always unforeseen. I've no more patience for you.

Hugh. I've got an invitation south to-morrow—an unexpected opening at Cork—(*turning to Con*) what we've been looking for.

Con. But it can wait.

Hugh. No—a special meeting.

Con. You're not over last week yet and——

Hugh. What a fuss you make over a wetting.

Con. You're colourless and your eyes are blood-shot. That's not like you.

Hugh (offhand). Any one would be washy for want of a few hours sleep.

Con. I was talking to Foley——

Hugh (a touch derisive). Foley has the doctors' instinct. They think a man has no other function in life, but to be sleek and well-groomed and ruddy.

Con. You're not going to make a virtue of being pallid and used up.

(Hugh sees the anger on Fan's face, and it causes him to take the matter more lightly than otherwise, to make little of it. It fixes her wavering determination to speak out. Her anger is well-considered and every line tells. She sees how it tells and almost desists. Con, too, shows he wishes her to desist. But she feels it a gain to shake Hugh and persists.)

Fan. I've no more persuasion to offer—there's a limit to my patience at least. But, Hugh, a little of the truth frankly may be of service. Is it not rather vain to think it of so much importance whether you go or whether you stay? Of what is your value in Dublin? You attend no more meetings because the meetings are tired of you—even your political friends dropped you for being impossible and violent. You can't get a half-dozen men you know to countenance you. Whatever body you enter immediately becomes restive and after a while the usual trouble begins; there comes commotion, an upheaval, and inevitably your exit. If you go south, you will get a hearing on some foolish recommendation and because the people there know nothing of your record: but were you among them for any time your experience there would be as here. Your head is turned by the success of your paper, but what is that? People read it because they are curious; they have not the faintest thought of doing anything you propose—surely, you know this: yet you compel your friends to tell you in so many words. And you must be told. We have defended you for your good intentions and energy, hoping to win you from your extravagant zeal; we kept our patience though you often tried it sorely: but the return for our consideration to you

is your indifference to us. What can we expect? Nora Mangan, the one who should have most influence with you, puts on no constraint for reasons you may guess, and your recognition of this is to take advantage of it. What is it all? Selfishness, vanity, obstinacy. Since the united offices of your friends can't avail to make you yield an inch, you might at least spare us the burden of your further confidence.

(She goes out leaving him dumb-founded. At the reference to Nora he winced perceptibly, growing paler. He now sits in a hopeless way. Fan's outburst was so unexpected, his usual readiness deserts him. Con stands silent awhile, watching him. He makes no move. Con comes nearer, hoping to attract him, yet still saying nothing. At last Hugh speaks.)

SCENE VII

CON AND HUGH.

Hugh. She meant it.

Con. It's her concern for Nora and you.

Hugh. Much of it is true; all of it is bitter.

Con. Since pleading with you failed, she has tried anger.

Hugh. My God, do all my friends feel as bitter?

Con. Not bitter, Hugh.

Hugh. I feel the ground going from under me.

(Hugh is so crushed, Con tries to soften the situation. He does not realize he's undoing Fan's work.)

Con. Don't misunderstand. You remember 'twas here you and Nora confessed your love. You told me but for that meeting you might have drifted apart. You thought the meeting accidental; 'twas not. Fan designed it. She said it ought to be and set herself to make it be. You owe it to her.

Hugh (the terribly strained look somewhat relieved).
Then—she is privileged.

Con. You will let this meeting go for once and relieve us all.

(Con thinks it has come to that, Hugh was so shaken; but his mistake in qualifying Fan's outburst now appears. Hugh's relieved manner—though not quite assured—defeats him.)

Hugh. I'm pledged to go.

Con. How pledged?

Hugh. I had to wire my decision.

Con. What is there in Cork that can't wait?

Hugh. An exceptional opening. You know Farrell who was with us—he's at a post in Cork and in touch with the fellows there. They have an annual meeting fixed for to-morrow night and are making special preparations to widen their scope. The meeting will be public and he has arranged for me to speak. The crowd he says is sound, but sick of the personal question and listless. Anyone who will give them the old straight issue in an unambiguous way will reach home. He should know at once and asked me to wire, and I wired I would go.

Con. You can put it off.

Hugh. I won't break my word.

Con (showing anger now). I had no right to qualify what Fan said.

Hugh (appealing rather than assertive). Don't you see this is quite exceptional?

Con. You must give yourself a thought.

Hugh. *Con,* I'm very fond of my comfort. If you set my thoughts on it, I'll think of nothing else.

(From Hugh's tone and manner, Con sees this is not affectation. It baffles him.)

Con. There's a mean.

Hugh. Not for me.

Con. You will persist, then, and go to-morrow.

Hugh. In the morning—6.40 train. I got to-morrow off.

Con. Why that early train?

Hugh. I'll have the day to go round and do some work for the paper. We'll have it in the shops before the meeting; distribute copies at the meeting—that will secure a footing.

Con. When is the meeting timed for?

Hugh. Eight o'clock.

Con. After the meeting?

Hugh. I'm coming back on the night-mail.

Con. Arriving here at four in the morning. In God's Name, what for?

Hugh. I was to meet Nora to-morrow night. She's out of town now—I sent her a line saying I'd be back on Sunday morning.

(Con sees he has lost the grip on Hugh and that Hugh is constrained as to his movements, which Con elicits by question. His practical sense keeps him from further argument but leads him to go over and elaborate Hugh's programme.)

Con. This is your programme, then: you'll have things to prepare to-night—you'll get to bed late, will have little sleep as you must rise before six o'clock to catch that train. The effects of last week's wetting are in you; there's not a chance of the weather improving for days; you'll spend to-morrow going about in the rain looking after the paper, will wind up with the meeting. You'll come up on the night train in place of a night's rest, six hours journey, cold and wet.

Hugh. What a cheerful way you have of putting things.

Con. Hugh, your action is insane.

Hugh. Con, I did not seek this: the appeal came straight to me. I will not give it a deaf ear. Don't you think it a little funny to make a fuss over a train

journey?—and when a risk really does come, are we to take it as a matter of course we should funk it?

Con. Hugh, have your way.

Hugh. Don't be so gloomy. You know I wanted to go south. We've done the north well. I was glad to get this opening.

Con. I'll go over on Sunday to hear about it. Don't worry at that. I know Sunday is engaged. I won't stay. Or perhaps I may see you at seven o'clock Mass. I forgot first Mass on Sunday is part of the programme.

Hugh (with a smile). Perhaps. I'm going to have a quiet day on Sunday, you see; and on Sunday night, don't fret, I'll sleep the sleep of the just.

CURTAIN.

ACT V

SECOND PLACE. *Hugh's Rooms as in Act I.*

SCENE I

NORA AND MRS. SULLIVAN.

(It is early morning before seven o'clock. The weather is wild and wet, a storm raging without. Nora has just arrived; her water-proof, dripping with the rain, is still on. The house-keeper, Mrs. Sullivan, is present. Nora is in terrible suspense and questions her anxiously; at which she shows surprise. As the scene progresses, the storm abates.)

Nora. Has he not come yet?

Mrs. Sullivan. No.

Nora. I came to insist on his lying down—to rest.

Mrs. Sullivan. It's a terrible morning. You're very wet. Take off your things.

Nora *(removing her hat and coat)*. Mrs. Sullivan—something has happened.

Mrs. Sullivan. Nonsense—he lost the train last night or changed his mind.

Nora. Changed his mind—no.

Mrs. Sullivan. Then, he lost the train, and a good job—such a terrible night.

Nora. He did not lose the train.

Mrs. Sullivan. But he must have lost it.

Nora. He would have sent a telegram.

Mrs. Sullivan. Dear girl, what's the fear? He's always going about.

Nora. It's nearly seven o'clock. He should have been here hours ago.—Something has happened. He must have got ill. Where is he?

Mrs. Sullivan. Why, what anxiety. Maybe, he went home with a friend, it being so early.

Nora. No; something is wrong. I feel it.

(Her hand on her breast; her distress painful.)

Mrs. Sullivan. You're frightening me. What could be wrong?—Hush, listen; someone below. Maybe he's come in—*(listening)* yes—I knew it.

(She opens the door. Hugh is standing in the door-way. Nora is breathless a moment, behind Mrs. Sullivan. The latter exclaims.) My God,

what's wrong!

SCENE II

NORA, HUGH, MRS. SULLIVAN.

(Hugh is dazed and unsteady in his gait; his eyes wild, bloodshot, feverish; his heavy coat, soaked with the rain and clinging to him; his look, wandering, rests on the house-keeper a moment in pain and anxiety, then falls on Nora. He gives a glad little cry and comes forward.)

Hugh. Nora, Nora, I've found you.

Nora. Hugh—oh, my God—Hugh darling, what's the matter? You're very ill. *(Her hand on his arm.)* Wet through. *(In a low voice.)*

Mrs. Sullivan. Take off his coat.

Hugh. I was afraid I wouldn't find you.

Mrs. Sullivan. Where have you been? When did you come?

Hugh. Nora, don't go away.—Was it yesterday I came? No, 'twas a long time ago.—You'll stay here, Nora?

(Nora's manner changes quite. In ignorance, she was helpless; but now all her faculties are alert; her movements are quick, firm, and masterful. She deftly but gently slips off his coat, restraining the inquiries of Mrs. Sullivan who shows little judgment, and inclines to talk. Hugh yields readily to Nora's guidance but takes her hands as she tries to remove his coat. He is intent on her and her movements.)

Nora. My own Hugh, you're very ill. You've been in the rain. Let me take off your coat.

Hugh. You won't go away, Nora?

Nora. No, darling, no—but you must lie down. *(She gets the coat off.)*

Hugh. When I came I was looking for you—and I went out the road—but couldn't see you—there was a great shadow between us—and I thought you were gone, and I kept trying to walk past the shadow—and I couldn't—and I got tired and came back. And you were here all the time, my own Nora.

Nora (drawing him to the sofa). Hugh, darling—you're terribly ill. You must lie down—you must.

Hugh (he has her hands). No—you'll go away.

Mrs. Sullivan, Let him lie here on the sofa.

Nora. For my sake, Hugh.

Hugh (sits but does not lie down). Yes, Nora—send for the priest——

Nora (her voice quavers). Yes—yes——

Hugh (still holding her). We've waited too long—we'll be married now.

Nora (her voice sinking). Oh, yes—quickly——

Hugh (trying to rise again). Send at once.

Nora (restraining him). Darling, lie down and I'll go myself.

Hugh (in fear, tightening his hold). No—no—if I let you go from my arms, the shadow will come.

Nora (her arms about him). It shan't, darling. I have you too close. Don't you feel my heart, beloved?

Hugh. Yes—yes—my own Nora—I am burning—burning—water——

Nora (aside to Mrs. Sullivan). Quick.

(The housekeeper understands and goes out.)

SCENE III

NORA AND HUGH.

Hugh. Will it be soon now—our marriage?

Nora. Yes, darling—the priest is coming——

Hugh. He is very slow.

Nora. Soon, now, soon.

Hugh (with great tenderness). I want to say—my wife—my own beloved——

Nora (a break in her voice). Yes—yes——

Hugh. And you—let me hear, Nora.

Nora (trembling). Hugh, my own beloved.

Hugh. Nora, my wife, say it.

Nora (almost voiceless). My husband.

Hugh. Ah, will it be soon? (*With fresh striving to rise.*)

Nora. Yes, but you must rest, while I get ready.

(Her self-control is marvellous, but an occasional tremble and quaver in the voice betrays the inner conflict.)

Hugh (in sudden fear, clutching her, staring over her shoulder). I see the shadow over there—it does not matter now—it's not between us——

Nora. No—no——

Hugh. Nora, see, the shadow has eyes—it's looking at us——

Nora. Don't mind it, darling. Let us look at each other. There.—(*Trying to turn his face to hers.*) Won't you look at me, Hugh? (*He is striving away.*)

Hugh. Yes—yes—I want to—I want to——

(He sinks on the sofa unconscious but muttering incoherently. Mrs. Sullivan returns carrying a tray, on which are a glass and two jugs, one containing water, one milk. She puts the tray on the table and goes to the sofa.)

SCENE IV

NORA, HUGH (UNCONSCIOUS), AND MRS. SULLIVAN.

Nora. He's unconscious. We must have a doctor quickly. *(The housekeeper shows irresolution.)*

Mrs. Sullivan (vaguely). Who'll go?

Nora. Is there no one about?

Mrs. Sullivan. There's the servant.—Could I go?

Nora. Of course, and send for the nearest priest.

Mrs. Sullivan (a little dazed). What doctor?

Nora. The nearest—oh, be quick.

Mrs. Sullivan. There's Doctor Foley—but he may be away.

(Nora's quick clear manner is in contrast with the older woman's dazed irresolution. Mrs. Sullivan is obviously unreliable. Nora gives Hugh a hurried examination to see could she risk leaving him. Mrs. Sullivan still waits. Nora resolves to go.)

Nora. I'll go.

Mrs. Sullivan (moving). No—no——

Nora (detaining her). Stay—I'll be quicker.

Mrs. Sullivan (fussing). Oh, I'll run.

Nora (decisive). Time is everything. *(With a last look at Hugh.)*

Mrs. Sullivan (coming back). Yes.

Nora (putting milk and water into the glass). If he's restless, give him this.

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes.

Nora. If he talks, humour him, but don't let him get up.

Mrs. Sullivan. I won't. *(But she's dazed.)*

Nora (taking her arm and shaking her). Do you hear?

Mrs. Sullivan (in a fright). I know—hurry.

(Nora slips on her coat quickly, takes her hat from Mrs. Sullivan who is trying to help and runs out fixing it.)

SCENE V

HUGH AND MRS. SULLIVAN.

(*Mrs. Sullivan watching by Hugh, who lies still, muttering incoherently. Soon he moves, straining into space, trying to rise. She restrains him gently. He looks vacantly at her, has a gleam of consciousness.*)

Hugh. Where am I?

Mrs. Sullivan. Here in your own room—rest now.

Hugh (starting). Nora.

Mrs. Sullivan. She's coming back. Lie down now.

Hugh (dazed). Coming back—Nora? Let me rise.

Mrs. Sullivan. Do rest. She'll be here soon.

Hugh (clearer). No—I've been wandering. My head is troubled.

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes; you've been out in the storm.

Hugh (puzzled). The storm?

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes; it's gone down now.

Hugh. And Nora is coming back?

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes; she was here just now.

Hugh (for a moment quite clear). Don't trifle with me. I'm afraid I'm very ill.

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes, yes; she was here. She went for Doctor Foley.

Hugh (confused again). She was here—last night—or was it to-night? No.—What time is it? She should be here—where am I?—Is she coming?

Mrs. Sullivan (getting frightened). Yes—yes—

Hugh. You're heartless to deceive me.

Mrs. Sullivan. But she was here.

Hugh (a gleam of sense). You know I'm not well. I've been talking foolishly.

Mrs. Sullivan. No, no, if she does not come, I'll send for her.

Hugh (wandering again). You're talking foolishly—don't you know there's to be a meeting?

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes—but don't mind.

Hugh. It's to be here and we must get ready.

(He is getting more feverish. She loses her presence of mind.)

Mrs. Sullivan. My God, what am I to do!

Hugh (sitting up on the sofa). They will be here soon—'twill be a good meeting—come.

Mrs. Sullivan (restraining him). I'll fix the things, if you'll rest.

Hugh. There are many things to do—if I could think—my head is confused—it's burning—water——

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes.

Hugh. Water——

Mrs. Sullivan (moving). 'Tis here.

Hugh (when her hand is off, he turns to get on his feet). I am not well.

Mrs. Sullivan (coming back and holding him). Lie down and I'll get it.

Hugh. Tell them I won't speak at the meeting—I'll be quite still—they say I speak too much—do I speak too much? I won't speak to-night—Ah, if my head were clear—I would know—water——

Mrs. Sullivan. There—I'll get it. *(Going quickly to the table.)*

Hugh (with sudden energy he rises, looking away from her to the window). I am coming.

Mrs. Sullivan (turning in a fright). My God, have mercy!

Hugh. Yes. *(Making suddenly for the window and trying to clamber out.)*

Mrs. Sullivan (running to him in terror and holding his arm). Mother of God, have pity on us!

Hugh. There's someone calling.

Mrs. Sullivan (her terror and her effort to humour him pitiably struggling). Won't you wait for Nora?

Hugh. Where is she?

Mrs. Sullivan. She's coming—Don't you hear her?

Hugh (letting her lead him back). I'm not sure—where are we?—The meeting—will she be at the meeting? (He presses his hand to his forehead.) No—we're going out by the river—up to the lakes—or is it in the woods? I want to think—(She is holding and looking at him helplessly.) What is it?

Mrs. Sullivan. The meeting—I must get ready. you know.

Hugh. Yes.

Mrs. Sullivan. And Nora will be here.

Hugh. Yes.

Mrs. Sullivan. And you mustn't speak, you know.

Hugh. Yes, that will be best—tell Nora.

Mrs. Sullivan. I'll tell her.

Hugh. She'll put her hand on my arm—will she? Tell her.

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes—yes—if you keep quiet.

Hugh. I will be quiet then (a little confidential),—then I feel I'm in Heaven.

Mrs. Sullivan. She will be angry because you don't rest. (She tries to lead him to the sofa. He gets more feverish and breaks free.)

Hugh. No—we're not ready.—We'll be late—the train is so slow—why does it want to run through my head? Here—it's here—(keen pain on his face. He puts one hand to the back of his head; with the other he seizes her wrist. Knock without. She tries to go.) Tell them to stop the train—my head won't stand it.

Mrs. Sullivan. Yes, yes—there's Nora knocking. I'll tell her and she'll stop the train.

Hugh. Nora and I are going on the water at sunset. (Knock.)

Mrs. Sullivan. She's waiting. Don't you hear her knock?

Hugh. Don't be impatient—I can wait. They think I'm indifferent now—but they don't know—

it's very hard to sit still when you're burning—but I'm not impatient—

Mrs. Sullivan. Nora—it's Nora is waiting.

Hugh. You're very strange—she won't forget—Nora never forgets—but will it last? It's Heaven on earth—we would not ask another Heaven if it lasted.

Mrs. Sullivan. She'll be angry if you speak like that.

Hugh (a little triumph). 'Twas Nora said it to me—one evening we were very happy—'twas full tide and sunset and there was music in the woods. (*The knocking grows imperative. His grip is like a vice on her wrist. She is trying to release herself in vain.*)

Mrs. Sullivan (struggling). My God! my God!

Hugh. Yes.

Mrs. Sullivan. They're coming to the meeting. I must let them in.

Hugh. Yes—tell them nothing matters if they don't give in—nothing—nothing—the last moment—that's the important time—the grip then—

(The knocking continues. She says nothing to him now but wrestles frantically to free herself. He is muttering to himself, unheeding her. He suddenly looks up and away.)

What's the good of being alive if we give in?

(Then as if met with a vision, he releases her so suddenly and unexpectedly, she stumbles and nearly falls. He moves away from her as in a dream. She pauses and looks back. He is standing, rapt, his lips moving as if in speech. Again a knock. She runs out.)

SCENE VI

HUGH, ALONE.

(He moves forward, his hand out, an eager look on his face, his voice just audible.)

Hugh. Give me that oar—there—push off now—gently—gently—there—we're moving—ah!—how

quiet it is on the water—let no one speak now—not a whisper—a song?—Yes—singing is beautiful at sunset. (*Sharp pain passes over his face. One hand goes to the back of his head, chafing; the other beats on the table in his agony. He moves around the table, quickening his steps.*) Stop the train—Con—I've promised not to speak—if they give in I won't sit still—what— (*For a moment the pain subsides, great eagerness lighting him up.*)—winning all along the line—I knew it—I knew it (*Again the acute agony.*)—My God—my God—my God—

(*He staggers, reels away from the table against the sofa, collapses on to the sofa. After a moment Con runs in followed by Mrs. Sullivan.*)

SCENE VII

HUGH (UNCONSCIOUS), CON, MRS. SULLIVAN.

Con (*raising Hugh and calling*). Hugh!

Mrs. Sullivan. This moment he must have fainted.

Con (*breathless, stooping, his hand over Hugh's heart*).

I can't feel—

Mrs. Sullivan (*with a gasp*). My God—don't say—

Con (*quickly*). Keep her out—I hear steps.

(*Mrs. Sullivan goes out hastily. Father O'Connor and Doctor Foley enter.*)

SCENE VIII

HUGH (UNCONSCIOUS), CON, FATHER O'CONNOR,
DR. FOLEY.

Con. You—thank God—quick, Foley.

(*Father O'Connor and Dr. Foley come one on either side of Hugh, whom Con is holding up. The priest prays silently, while the doctor gives a quick but careful examination. A moment's pause—Foley speaks in subdued tones.*)

Foley. It's the worst.

Con. Not dead?

Foley. Yes, dead.

Con. This hand is warm.

Foley. The breath has only just left him.

Con. But there's colour in his face.

Foley. It sometimes happens—he died in great pain.

Con. And no one near him.

Father O'Connor. God never left him.

Con. I can't realize 'tis death. Look at his face.

Foley. He's composed now.

Father O'Connor. He's very beautiful.

(Hugh's look is strangely beautiful. The last struggle forced the blood to his face; it has not entirely receded and leaves a colour behind with an effect strangely natural. The lines of pain are smoothed out; his expression is quiet and happy with the trace of a smile. The others stand looking at him in silence. His look acts on them for a moment like a spell. Foley's reference to Nora breaks the spell.)

Foley. She will be coming.

Con. My God, what shall we do?

Foley. There may be a delay. She missed me and ran for others.

Con (to Father O'Connor). Could you keep her out?

Father O'Connor. I'll try.

Foley. There's some one coming

Con. Quick.

Father O'Connor. She has courage, thank God. *(Going.)*

Con (looking on Hugh). Thank God, he's so beautiful. *(Father O'Connor goes out quickly. Immediately an altercation is heard outside.)*

SCENE IX

HUGH (DEAD), NORA, CON, FATHER O'CONNOR,
DR. FOLEY.

Father O'Connor (outside). Not now—Nora—
later——

Nora (outside). I must—I must—let me——

Father O'Connor (outside). Later——

Nora (outside). I know it's the end—oh, let me—
I must——

(They appear at the door. Father O'Connor leads her in. She comes forward quickly but softly. General silence a moment. She kneels by Hugh. The others stand around. She becomes oblivious of their presence.)

Nora (kneeling by Hugh). Hugh, my own Hugh, you have not left me?—No, you're waiting still—it's on your face—take me—oh, Hugh, Hugh, I can't stay—you have power in Heaven now—plead for me—I want to go—I want to go.—Dead?—no—my beloved—dead! Why did I not wait?—not to get his last word! Oh I should not have left him——*(Swaying back.)*

Father O'Connor (softly). Nora, it was God's will.

Nora. Too late, too late—we waited too long. You won't call me that name again, Hugh?—Don't you want me at all now?—Don't you hear me speak?—Oh, you are near me—Breathe on me with your spirit that I may go—You will not leave me here—You care for me still, Hugh?—There is no touch in his hand that was so firm—there is no light in his eyes that were so brave—my God! he won't speak any more—he won't breathe on me again——

Father O'Connor (very gently). Nora——

Nora. Don't you understand?

Father O'Connor. We must all bear it.

Nora. It's not the same.

Father O'Connor. Courage.

Nora. His lips were warm on mine a little while ago. (*She breaks down, bends and kisses him passionately, starts back shivering at the cold touch.*) Cold—cold—my beloved—cold! (*She faints.*)

Father O'Connor. Ah! (*Kneeling by her.*)

Foley (*on the other side, raising her head.*) She'll be right in a moment.

Con. Shall we lift her out?

Father O'Connor. No, she should go through it all again. She'll be calm now.

Foley. She's coming round.

Father O'Connor. Draw her back a little. (*They draw her back gently.*)

Nora (*coming to.*) What is it?

Father O'Connor. A little faintness, *Nora.*

Nora. I remember.

Father O'Connor. You will be brave.

Nora (*rising.*) Yes—now.

Father O'Connor (*putting his hand on her arm.*) Stay awhile.

Nora (*quietly.*) There is no fear. (*Drawing near the sofa quietly.*) Who could think him dead?—so beautiful!

Father O'Connor. Too beautiful for life.

Nora (*in a whisper, she is rapt, oblivious of the others.*) Oh, my beloved.

Foley. He should have lived—it need not have been.

Father O'Connor. It had to be.

Con. What was it, *Foley*?

Foley. Pneumonia—he'd have pulled through but—complications. And the strain on the heart was too much.

Con. Everything came together: there was no other way. (*They speak in low tones, Nora unheeding.*)

Father O'Connor (*turns to her again.*)

Father O'Connor (*gently.*) *Nora*—let us go now.

Nora (*not removing her eyes from Hugh.*) I could stay looking on him for ever.

Con. I can't feel the gloom till I look away.

Nora. It's the look of the conqueror. 'Tis we who are troubled and frightened. There is no fear on his face.

Con. That is how he would speak.

Nora. They did not heed him. Those who doubted must come and see him dead.

(Her voice is soft. There is strange fascination in her face and tones—she never takes her eyes from Hugh. The priest notes her unusual manner and is uneasy.)

Father O'Connor *(very gently)*. Nora.

Nora. He will go to the chapel?

Father O'Connor. Yes.

Nora. We must leave him uncovered that everyone may look on his face, that men may wish to be like him in death——

Father O'Connor. It is a favour from God to the faithful in life.

Nora. The dedicated in spirit are not afraid to die—oh,—*(nearer her natural manner with a quick look at Father O'Connor)*—I feel he will speak.

Father O'Connor. There is no need now: his work is done.

Nora. Let us not speak, but look on him.

(Rapt again, general silence a moment. Very gently Father O'Connor tries to lead her away. She neither speaks nor moves. Con touches the priest aside.)

Con *(in a whisper to Father O'Connor)*. Fan came out with me—went to seven o'clock Mass. I told her I'd be back with her. She'll call.

(The priest looks relieved. Mrs. Sullivan appears at the door. She beckons to Con. Con goes to the door. They whisper. She retires again. Con waits at the door, looking out, expectant. Nora starts as if awakened from her spell by the whispered consultation. Father O'Connor turns to her.)

Nora. Let me not think of burial——

Father O'Connor. We should not fear, thinking of him——

Nora (a low sharp cry). When they cover him——

Father O'Connor. We shall have his memory always beautiful.

Nora. When they shut him from my sight—oh, my God, when they separate us on earth for ever——

(Momentarily overcome again, she buries her head on Hugh's breast where he lies. Con at the door beckons to someone outside. Fan appears hurriedly. She comes quickly to Nora's side.)

SCENE IX

THE LAST GROUP AND FAN. *Mrs. Sullivan appears at the door.*

Fan. Nora!

Nora (raising her head). Oh, Fan!

(Fan takes Nora in her arms. Nora yields to her sympathy in silence. Fan raises her gently, holding her close. They stand by the sofa, looking on Hugh. The others stand around a little apart, relieved by Fan's arrival. There is no word till Fan feels a tremble run through Nora and she begins to speak her comfort in a low voice, barely audible.)

Fan. Nora—how wonderfully beautiful! It should end like this—I did a bitter thing to stop him—gave him bitter pain—his last look, it cut me through—and it all failed. A greater Power than ours was urging him on—how he rests at last—beautiful, beautiful—we need not pray for him—God is pleased with him—but I think we might say a little prayer to him—he will listen to you, Nora—to leave his secret with us—to be faithful for ever.

(Fan and Nora kneel by the sofa. Fan still keeps her arms about Nora, who yields to her in everything. The men kneel a little farther away. Mrs. Sullivan, who has been standing at the door, comes forward and kneels at the foot of the sofa. All heads bowed.)

CURTAIN.

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